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## **NIEUWE WEST-INDISCHE GIDS**

**onder redactie van**

**Dr. Mr. J.H. Adhin, Ir. F.C. Bubberman, Drs. L.H. Daal, Dr.  
D.C. Geijskes, Prof. dr. H. Hoetink, Drs. L.J. van der Steen,  
Prof. dr. H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen, Dr. J.H. Westermann en  
Dr. P. Wagenaar Hummelinck, secretaris en eindredacteur,  
Sweelincklaan 84, Bilthoven (tel. 030-782098).**

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CORNELIS CH. GOSLINGA



CURAÇAO AS A SLAVE-TRADING CENTER DURING THE  
WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION (1702-1714)

'The War of the Spanish Succession,' wrote Frank Taylor in his celebrated study on Marlborough, 'is a perfect example of the vices and defects of a coalition.'<sup>1</sup> Unity of purpose and harmony of action were wholly sacrificed to the selfish and short-sighted ambitions of the vast confederacy's individual members. The Emperor's goals differed considerably from those of the Maritime Powers and the latter, competing savagely with each other in the East- and West-Indian markets, emerged as rather untrustworthy allies in the common European cause.

With the advent of the eighteenth century, trade — including the African slave trade — provided the cornerstone for the European powers' colonial empires.<sup>2</sup> Prevailing over all other considerations, trade came to govern eighteenth century politics and play a prominent role in that century's first major conflict. Only some one unaware of its underlying causes, could take this struggle for a dynastic one.<sup>3</sup> It was neither for this king nor for that emperor that the European nations drew their swords, but solely to further their own ambitions and the West Indies were — at least for one of them — the most coveted prize. In other words, the War of the Spanish Succession was, far more than any other preceding conflict, a war for economic goals. Great Britain wanted the Spanish-American market, yet fear of competition from the enemy — the French — or the ally — the Dutch — inspired the disingenuous diplomacy for which the country became known as 'perfidious Albion.'

Britain's claims, as far as the continent was concerned, were, undoubtedly, less pressing than those of the Netherlands or of the Emperor. She responded coolly to the Partition Treaty concocted between William III and Louis XIV.<sup>4</sup> Charles II's will put an end to all speculation and scheming and, said to be written under the influence of the Pope who dreaded the presence of



both the Dutch and the English in South America, it convinced Louis XIV to put himself and France solidly behind his grandson, the Duke of Anjou.

For the time being, William III seemed willing to recognise the Duke as King of Spain. But Louis' careless exclamation that the Pyrenees had ceased to exist certainly did not fail to irritate Great Britain. Only too well did she realize that if Louis controlled the governments of both France and Spain, he would be in a position to clear the way for a monopoly of French trade, particularly where Spanish America was concerned.<sup>5</sup> An additional sign pointing ominously in that direction was the treaty of alliance between Spain and Portugal, concluded at Lisbon in June, 1701.

Among the commercial advantages France expected to derive from the accession of the Duke of Anjou to the Spanish throne was the *asiento*, the right to import blacks into the Spanish American colonies. With this in mind she had already helped to bring about the adjustment of several disputes between the Portuguese African Company and the Spanish government. Soon afterwards, the French negotiated the concession of the *asiento* to their Guinea Company. In September, 1701, King Philip V signed the agreement bestowing upon the French company the exclusive right during the next ten consecutive years, beginning on May 1, 1702, to introduce black slaves into Spanish America.<sup>6</sup>

England immediately understood that the new arrangement seriously threatened her West Indian interests. After three wars with the Dutch the latter, though not yet eliminated in the commercial arena, no longer posed a political challenge to Albion's arrogance, and the Acts of Navigation kept their competition sufficiently well under control. A combined French-Spanish Crown might well become a far more serious menace to the English. Consequently, their first move was to bring the Portuguese over to their side, and a fleet was dispatched to the mouth of the Tagus to convince the Portuguese king of the legitimacy of the English rationale. Should Charles of Austria become King of Spain instead, the restoration of some Portuguese colonies would be a just reward for Portugal's support of the Anglo-Dutch-Austrian cause.

Britain's next move was to gain control over the West Indian trade. In return for an Austrian promise not to interfere with English or Dutch interests in Spanish America, King William III agreed that the Maritime Powers should conquer the region in the Emperor's name. This offensive/defensive alliance between Aus-



tria, Great Britain, the United Provinces, and Portugal, concluded after William's death, was accepted by Queen Anne who, initially, adhered to William's policy.<sup>7</sup> It proposed that an Anglo-Dutch fleet would attempt to bring Spanish America under the sway of the Austrian eagle. Charles would then grant free trade to the English and the Dutch in the newly conquered colonies under his rule.

With the war going well for the Allied Powers, in 1707, Queen Anne ventured to approach Charles for the conclusion of a treaty bearing more specifically on Spanish America. A separate provision would be to sanction the formation of an Anglo-Spanish Company governing Spanish American trade or, if this would prove impractical, give Englishmen the same privileges that the Spaniards already possessed with respect to this commerce. In this draft the Dutch were not mentioned. Apparently, Queen Anne had come to the realization that English and Dutch interests in the West were too competitive and best kept apart.

Hence it was this West Indian trade which was at the heart of the constant friction which engulfed the Maritime Powers, and which ultimately resulted, particularly after 1709, in a paralyzing stalemate on the European battlefield. It may be true that the Queen honestly intended to follow in William's footsteps, but she was a woman uncannily clever in judging the mood of her people and did not choose to impose her will when the House of Commons, freely elected by the landed interests, arduously pursued a policy of peace after several years of uninterrupted warfare.<sup>8</sup>

While the Whigs were unable to come up with an alternative to continuing the war — a war by far more vital to both the United Provinces and the Empire — Toryism gained ground. Once the spectre of a united France and Spain under one crown had faded away and Gibraltar had been conquered, Queen Anne quickly lost all interest in the continental power scrambles.

The United Provinces, on the other hand, doggedly continued the war aiming simultaneously to safeguard her trade in the East and the West and to protect her undefended southern border. Great Britain, quite amenable to help her ally achieve the latter goal, having no territorial designs on the continent herself, instead, concentrated all her efforts on Spanish America, her West Indian trade, and the *asiento*. The fatal mistake of the Dutch lay not so much in their distrust of an ally whose priorities had shifted, but in a wrong evaluation of their own priorities subor-



minating their West Indian interests to the dubious protection of a series of barrier fortresses on their southern flank. Great Britain, well aware of this prevailing attitude, profited from it. On the other hand, did she really have legitimate grounds to complain about some of the activities of her maritime ally? 'The Dutch should do more by sea than of late years they have been used to do,' wrote Bolingbroke in January, 1711,<sup>9</sup> while their conduct both on the African coast and in the East Indies were 'displeasing the English authorities to a high degree.'<sup>10</sup> However, at this stage, Queen Anne was probably still desirous to cultivate a harmonious relationship with the Dutch, although the change from a Whig to a Tory Cabinet upset the latter to no small degree.

At the same time that Great Britain, without her ally's acquiescence, was negotiating the *asiento* with French and Spanish representatives, she realized only too well that the Dutch, obsessed with the fear of their competitor gaining commercial and economic advantages at their expense, could stealthily conspire to go at the same goal on their own making, and make the British the dupes of a peace, as they, by now, felt they had been of the war.

Great Britain was indeed getting tired of the war and the setbacks she suffered, cumulating in Charles III becoming Emperor of Austria, were no incentives to continuing *ad infinitum*. She felt betrayed by her ally — or pretended betrayal — because the Dutch had 'lessened their proportions in every part of the war, even in that of Flanders, on the pretense of poverty.'<sup>11</sup> Besides, by now, she had practically achieved her own goals which were the obliterating of French (and Spanish) trade in the West Indies, the acquisition of the *asiento*, the elimination of Dutch competition in the slave trade, and the assurance that the crowns of France and Portugal would remain separated.

The changed British mood became rather obvious and did not fail to alarm the Dutch ally who, due to the humiliation of the French at Geertruidenberg, was powerless to react and utterly at the mercy of the English. Because of the unrealistic demand by the Dutch that Louis XIV should undertake either to persuade Philip V or to compel him by means of force to renounce the Spanish throne, the French king had adamantly refused to address himself to the Dutch or to negotiate directly with them.<sup>12</sup> Thereupon, the new Tory leader — Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford — wishing to conceal the French overtures from the ally, asked the French to submit proposals which the English, in turn, would lay before the Dutch. This British attitude — a French diplomatic



victory — made any Dutch initiative impossible. Whatever choices the Dutch would face would be at the discretion of the British who, of course, were not about to lose sight of their own interests. In a conference on August 1711, between Great Britain and France, the British insisted that only their own demands and not those of their allies were at issue. They probably did not consider this an act of prevarication. 'Whatever occurs to us concerning the common interest will always be nakedly offered to the Confederacy of the States. Whatever relates to the private interest of Britain, as far as the concurrence of the Dutch is necessary or reasonable, will also, without any reserve, be communicated.' <sup>13</sup> This statement left, of course, the door wide open for diplomatic detours and separate negotiations which were soon concluded and which gave, in September, 1711, the English the coveted *asiento*. <sup>14</sup>

Were the Dutch aware of British duplicity? The evidence is inconclusive. At the end of August and again at the beginning of September, 1711, the Earl of Oxford was informed that the Dutch 'think you are running away with the trade, and that you are far advanced and keep them in the dark.' <sup>15</sup> Was Queen Anne sincere when she gave the Earl of Strafford, her representative in Utrecht, the following instruction: 'You can assure them that we have made no stipulation for ourselves which may clash with the interests of Holland.' <sup>16</sup> Yet, in November, 1711, Oxford clearly deceived Buys, the extra-ordinary Dutch envoy in London, with the assurance that Great Britain had not achieved anything neither in Spain nor in the Spanish West Indies. Great Britain was determined to deprive the Dutch of any basis for claiming a share in the *asiento* or in any other advantage the Spanish American trade might yield which they, themselves, by now were sure to obtain from Philip V. <sup>17</sup>

The humiliating role of the Dutch in the peace negotiations of Utrecht is well known. As Acton bluntly puts it: 'France concluded a disastrous war with a triumphant settlement.' <sup>18</sup> The United Provinces, never realizing its inherent weakness, gained the barrier treaty, an expensive and empty guarantee, but the Spanish American trade passed her by. 'On traitera de la paix chez vous, pour vous et sans vous' were the sneering words the Dutch representatives had to swallow from their French colleague De Polignac. On the other hand, Great Britain betrayed her ally for the sake of mere profit, and allowed herself to become deeper involved in the slave trade.



## Caribbean aspects of the War

Against this European background the island of Curaçao, a small Dutch speck in the Caribbean, had tottered along throughout the disastrous years of the war miraculously surviving the threat of occupation by France and the bankruptcy of its own shameful slave trade.

The two European allies, referred to as the Maritime Powers, were not on such good footing at the other side of the Atlantic as their role in the first years of the War of the Spanish Succession would indicate. In the Caribbean constant friction, mutual vilification, and defamation caused by jealousy and commercial rivalry were the order of the day. In spite of three Anglo-Dutch wars and a rigorous application of successive Navigation Laws, the Dutch managed to survive and, worse, to offer stiff competition to the British, a fact which caused many a full blooded Englishman to swell with indignation. Although not reaching the extreme despair of Pepys' exclamation that 'the Devil shit Dutchmen', many governors of the West Indian plantations voiced their feelings clearly. 'If the Summer Islands be overtaken by surprise or otherwise by the French or Dutch, which may be easily done at this time with 500 men,' wrote Governor Randolph of the Bermudas, 'they will command all the trade in these parts of the world.'<sup>19</sup> English worries with respect to Dutch inroads in their commercial pretensions played a major role in the correspondence of British West Indian governors with the home government. In this part of the world the Dutch ally was, henceforth, considered almost an enemy. A *True Account of Several Grand Abuses in Trade and the Proper Remedy* stated that 'the merchants of New York have gotten their estates by the Curesaw trade' and pointed toward the excessive intercourse between Barbados and the Dutch West Indian settlements.<sup>20</sup> A similar heavy traffic existed between the Bermudas and Curaçao 'where they manage to trade with the Spaniards,'<sup>21</sup> and with most other, if not all British West Indian islands. It even extended to the continental colonies, from Carolina up to New England. While provisions and slaves were the main commodities Curaçao delivered, it is interesting to itemize these provisions. With the exception of logwood and salt (and slaves) which were included in the monopoly of the Dutch West India Company, the merchants of Curaçao imported sugar, pork,



flour, biscuit, and other dry goods plus tobacco from the British, French, and Spanish colonies in return for all sorts of lining, manufactured goods, hardware, wines (especially claret and Madera), onions, cabbage, brandy, rum, sugar, tobacco, molasses, flour, and cacao.<sup>22</sup> Of course, most, if not all, of this trade was illegal, and the smuggling of blacks probably outranked in importance all items combined.<sup>23</sup>

Underlying the official complaints about the smuggling and this illegal inter-island and inter-colonial trade,<sup>23</sup> which seemed to have flourished in spite of all prohibiting regulations, is a good old dose of envy aimed at the Dutch competitor who seemed to succeed where the Englishman had failed. 'English trade is very dull,' is only one example of the type of outcry with which the Council of Trade and Plantations was deluged.<sup>24</sup> This animosity was further exacerbated by the irritating fact that the Dutch, before and after 1702, when war broke out, maintained an excellent relationship with the inhabitants of the Spanish American mainland — though not always with the authorities — who exchanged produce, and silver or gold for blacks.<sup>25</sup> Could it be that these envious English officials had suggested that the mother country attack Curaçao and did the War of the Spanish Succession destroy that design? 'As for Curaçao, if it were sunk under water, it would be better for England by 5 or 600,000 pound in one year,' expresses quite well the prevailing mood.<sup>26</sup> The Governor of the Bermudas, Edward Randolph, wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantations in January, 1700 when war was still far from the horizon, that he had sent them a sketch of Curaçao 'which shows the harbour.' This map was certainly not sent for peaceful purposes.<sup>27</sup>

This English attitude soured relations with the Dutch in the Caribbean to no small extent, it also provided the Anglo-Dutch alliance with an extra dimension. 'The Dutch are notorious for their illegal trade,'<sup>28</sup> 'the Dutch will reap the benefit from the English,'<sup>29</sup> 'the Acts of Trade and the 4½ % act encouraged sending of many millions of pounds of sugar to St. Eustatius, Curaçao, and St. Thomas,'<sup>30</sup> 'the Curaçao trade is carried on more than ever,'<sup>31</sup> and 'all illegal trade is carried on there,'<sup>32</sup> are but a handful of quotes expressing the spiteful feelings of many English officials.

Many Dutchmen equated these remarks with an undisguised defamation of their national character. In Lord Cornbury's letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations, it was implied that all



Dutch were cowards, while the Governor of New York, a city which at that time still counted a powerful Dutch element among its inhabitants, refers to the Dutch as 'generally the meanest of the people, men extremely ignorant of all things.'<sup>33</sup> Did these and other vilifications have some impact in the home country? It is difficult to guess their weight, but one thing is certain: there was in the British Caribbean an undeniable resentment against the Dutch and a deep-seated fear of their commercial prowess.<sup>34</sup>

Within the frame of these two dimensions — a European war with Great Britain as an unreliable ally and the Caribbean stage presenting a neverending rivalry — the Dutch West India Company made every effort to sustain its main business, the slave trade. It was not easy. Heinsius, the Grand Pensionary, professed only a lukewarm interest in West Indian affairs. The end of the Coymans *Asiento* dealt a heavy blow to the WIC's slave trade, from which it, nevertheless, managed to recover to gain possession of another *asiento* in 1691.<sup>35</sup> Years of rapid growth followed only to be interrupted by a recession which lasted until 1697, when a new contract was signed which called for the delivery of 2,500 - 3,000 blacks per year to Curaçao.<sup>36</sup> Again the trade flourished and declined. Negotiations next took place with the Portuguese African Company which, since 1693, had been in control of the *asiento*.<sup>37</sup> At the turn of the century trade was at a very low tide, and when, in 1701, the Portuguese were forced to hand over their *asiento* rights to the French, the future for the Dutch company looked black indeed, in spite of the fact that, as Postma rightly observes, single nations did no longer completely control the *asiento*. When chances were that the Archduke Charles would be King of Spain — namely in 1703 and again in 1706 and 1707 — the Dutch company again exerted itself to gain a privileged position. In those years the slave trade was doing rather well, and the only obstacle to stand in the way of the WIC's Board of X was the uncompromising stand proffered by Great Britain, the ally. Not fully backed by the Dutch government, the WIC emerged the loser in this confrontation.

During the War of the Spanish Succession Curaçao was presided over by Nicolaas van Beek (acting governor 1700-1701, governor 1701-1704), Jacob Beck (1704-1708), his brother Abraham Beck (1708-1710), and Jeremias van Collen (acting governor 1710-1711, governor 1711-1715). Archival research, although far from completed, is uncovering a revealing picture of Dutch slave trading in this critical period.



## Research of Dutch slave trading

Mention should be made here of Johannes Postma's recent doctoral thesis *The Dutch Participation in the African Slave Trade*, cited above. Postma discusses this trade from the African standpoint and covers the period from 1675 through 1795. In contrast, we limit ourselves to a much shorter period, the years of the War of the Spanish Succession, with the main focus on the island of Curaçao, the receiving end of this trade. Our research will, for the period mentioned, not only supplement Postma's dates but also introduce some alternative information and explain, it is hoped, some apparent contradictions between his findings and ours. This does not mean that everything related to the subject has been said. Research in this field — as far as the Dutch participation is concerned — has only just been started. Many treatises have explored the trading exploits of the various European powers along the African coast, yet, hitherto not much has been written concerning the activities of the Dutch on the other side of the Atlantic. Postma's pioneering study will, we expect, stimulate studies like ours. We realize, of course, that most conclusions we made will have to be tentative until after the records of the Dutch West India Company have been more fully explored.<sup>38</sup>

The Second or New Dutch West India Company, founded in 1674 succeeded the bankrupt first institution of that name, and was, during the long century of its existence — it was liquidated in 1791 — mainly a slave trading company. Although, as mentioned, many dates are still lacking and much research remains to be done, Postma brings substantial new data to light as to its first 25 years. During 1675 - 1699, for instance, the Caribbean port of Curaçao admitted at least 22 slavers whose cargoes (known in Dutch as *armazoenen*) and final destination have been verified. These ships unloaded a total of 9876 blacks,<sup>39</sup> while an additional 7800 blacks were delivered by an unknown number of ships, to be divided between Curaçao and Surinam. It may be safely assumed that Curaçao absorbed half of these. A thorough examination of Postma's dates — which are probably not complete — brings the total of blacks disembarked at Willemstad by the Dutch West India Company to at least 13,500.<sup>40</sup> This trade, although frequently encountering obstacles and interruptions, especially during the Nine Years' War — King William's War — nevertheless, appears to have survived those crises with minimal consequences.



Although the War of the Spanish Succession was to deal a severe blow to the West India Company's slave trade, at the turn of the century, its prospects were highly propitious. In August, 1700, the slave-trade commissioner Gerard Luls, at Willemstad, Curaçao, wrote the Board of the WIC: 'I can assure you, gentleman, that if we had two or three cargoes of blacks [*armazoenen*] we could sell them immediately, and even the non-deliverable slaves [the sick ones and the so-called *manquerons*, slaves with some defect] would bring a good price, because there is a dire need for them.'<sup>41</sup>

For a better understanding of this statement, the following may serve to clarify. High on the Governor of Curaçao's list of priorities, after the arrival of a slaver from Africa, was a separation of the blacks. A careful selection was made separating those considered to be mentally and physically healthy, and consequently marketable, the so-called *Piezas de India*, from the unsalable slaves, the sick ones and those who were too old or had defects, the *manquerons*.<sup>42</sup> This discriminatory process was performed by a three-men committee, appointed by the governor.<sup>43</sup> The *Piezas de India* were sold at fixed export rates to foreign clients, at times via the representatives of the *asiento* on Curaçao. The *manquerons* and sick slaves were immediately disposed of at a public auction.

Thus, for instance, when the slaver '*t Wapen van Holland*' disembarked its remaining 453 blacks from an *armazoen* of 664 (205 had not survived the mid passage and 6 had died in port) the selection was made as follows:

141 males <i>Piezas de India</i>	141
70 females (with 2 babies) id.	70
24 boys (between 12 and 15 years) each $\frac{2}{3}$ <i>Pieza de India</i>	16
10 boys (between 8 and 12 years) each $\frac{1}{2}$ <i>Pieza de India</i>	5
8 girls (between 12 and 15 years) $\frac{2}{3}$ <i>Pieza de India</i>	5
4 girls (between 8 and 12 years) $\frac{1}{2}$ <i>Pieza de India</i>	2
<hr/> 257 heads	<hr/> <i>Piezas de India</i> 239

The unfit blacks were thus described:

73 male *manquerons*  
 44 female id. with 2 babies  
 30 males sick  
 37 females sick with 2 babies



5 boys *manquerons*  
 6 boys sick  
 1 girl sick

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196 *manquerons* and sick slaves

In contrast of the *Piezas de India* who always brought a fixed price — first 100 *pesos*, later 108 — the *manquerons* were sold at public auction for as little as one and as much as 99 *pesos*.<sup>44</sup>

#### W.I.C. and *lorredraaiers*

While on the African coast the price of blacks was constantly inflated — in the period from 1675 to the Peace of Utrecht Postma mentions and increase from 25 to 45 guilders — the WIC had to contend not only with the stiff competition of other European nations, especially the English and the French, but also with that of the so-called *lorredraaiers* or interlopers, those slavers outfitted by Dutchmen themselves who tried to dodge the Company's monopoly. With practically no overhead nor any maintenance costs for the fortresses that the Company had to staff with garrisons and other employees, these *lorredraaiers* were able to offer higher prices to the African vendors and sell at lower prices than the WIC at the other side of the Atlantic. The Company's employees also had to abide by the *Marktbrief* or Price Table, which listed maximum allowable prices in their purchase of blacks. No WIC servant was permitted to pay more than the authorized sum, while, of course, the *lorredraaiers* had much more leeway and operated without these strangling restrictions. This situation frequently forced the WIC slavers to remain on the African coast for weeks and even months before they managed to assemble a worthwhile cargo.<sup>45</sup> Another consequence of the competition and the paralyzing delays was the fact — often pointed out by successive governors of Curaçao — that the slavers would leave the coast only partially loaded.<sup>46</sup>

#### Problems with Cartagena

But if the African side of the slave trade was beset by many problems, these were well matched by the troubles which converged on the Caribbean side. The *Graaf van Laarwijk* provides an excellent example of a slaver becoming mixed up in local quarrels without any fault of its captain but to the great detriment of the



WIC. Destined for Cartagena, together with another Dutch slaver, it was prohibited from entering that port as a result of prevailing tensions between the governor and the local *asentista*, Don Gaspar de Andrade. Consequently, both ships had to disembark their *armazoenen* at Playa Grande without receiving any payment whatsoever.<sup>47</sup> These experiences made the Governor of Curaçao extremely wary; they were also broadly discussed in the spring meeting of the Board of X in 1701. Van Beek's suggestion, to suspend the trade with the mainland, was approved while the governor was admonished to keep a watchful eye over events in the neighboring colony.<sup>48</sup> He was further specifically urged to warn Dutch slavers, passing Curaçao on their way to Cartagena and Porto Bello, of the Spanish attitude. Unfortunately, this order came too late to save three other slavers.<sup>49</sup> A fourth one, the *Vergulde Vrijheid* (*Gilded Liberty*), safely dropped anchor in Willemstad, unloading almost 700 blacks.

For a long time Governor van Beek remained in the dark as to the reason for these Spanish actions. As it turned out, the origin of the trouble centered around the Royal Portuguese African (or Guinea) Company, and its inability to meet its obligations. To avoid possible bankruptcy, the Company — from its headquarters in Cartagena — turned to smuggling. This gave the Governor of Cartagena the necessary pretext for seizing any slaver in employ of the Portuguese Company. As it happened, these were mostly Dutch or English, thus hampering seriously these nations' trade. This muddy situation was cleared up with the so-called Adjustment Treaty concluded between Spain and Portugal in June, 1701.<sup>50</sup>

But the elimination of this Spanish American market robbed the WIC of many sales and made deep inroads into its profits. The Board of X, thereupon, advised Van Beek to send the blacks instead to St. Eustatius, which seemed ideally situated for trade with the neighboring English and French islands. Van Beek was far from enthusiastic. Besides its lack of money, he protested, the island 'will lie in a danger zone as soon as the war, we are expecting, explodes. Most of its planters have already sent away their sugar, hardware, and slaves to the neutral island of St. Thomas, and are adopting a wait-and-see attitude.'<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, more slavers continued to arrive. The *toerbeurten* (the equipment of slavers with *cargazoenen* — cargoes of commodities — for the African coast) had been organized by the Board of X a year ahead of time when nothing as yet was known about a



French *asiento*. This caused another problem. Now there were 1000 mouths more to feed, a substantial problem on Curaçao where almost all food had to be imported. It would mean extra expenses for the Company, unless the blacks were sold immediately. Thus Van Beek — in spite of his recent deplorable experiences with the Spaniards — sent a little barque to the Caracas coast, hoping it would bring back substantial orders.<sup>52</sup> Van Beek's misgivings to the contrary, all the blacks found ready buyers.

Yet worries still nagged at the back of his mind. Rumors, he wrote, circulated in the Caribbean that Portugal was about to lose the *asiento* and that it would pass into French hands. 'I hope it is not true,' he commented, well aware that this transfer would deal a crushing blow to the slave trade with the French and Spanish colonies. The situation was further aggravated by the constant harassment of *lorredraaiers*. At the end of February of that same year, for instance, the Caracas coast was visited by a Zeelandian interloper fitted out by the merchanthouse of Belmonte & Sousa. Belmonte, a Zeelandian businessman, and Sousa, the representative of the Royal Portuguese African Company in Amsterdam, had joined forces and had become partners in a venture to outwit the WIC. The *lorredraai* was heavily armed, a dire necessity, because if seized by the WIC, ship and cargo would be confiscated, and captain and crew sent to the United Provinces to stand trial. Its *armazoen* of 400 blacks, purchased in Angola, was sold in Cartagena.<sup>53</sup>

Due to the political climate speculation ran rife among Curaçao's inhabitants. It was hotly debated as to which way the Spanish colonies on the mainland would swing. The Board of X, clearly aware of the dilemma, cautioned the Curaçao governor and told him not to show his hand too soon. Under no condition was he to offend the Spaniards by continuing to issue commissions against them; in case he had already done so, he should recall the privateers. Trade with the Spanish colonies was to carry on as long as possible. Curaçao's very life-blood depended on it. He should keep a careful watch over the Curaçao representatives of the *asiento* — now that it had changed hands — not trust them, and make an attempt to collect debts still owed to the Company. Rumors had it, the Board concluded, that the French had acquired the *asiento* which, in view of the fact that the United Provinces had chosen the Austrian side in the emerging conflict, was bad news indeed.<sup>54</sup>



The minutes of the Board of X reveal the varying opinions of the Curaçao governor. While a scant six months earlier, in an exhilarating mood, he had recommended an increase of *toerbeurten* providing for an annual delivery at Willemstad of 2,500 to 3,000 blacks, he now advised against a possible overextension of available resources. 'In these dubious times the slave trade of this island has come to an almost complete standstill,' he wrote. Buyers were turned away unless they paid in cash. Such was the case of a Frenchman who wanted to purchase 100 blacks; similarly a Spaniard wishing to buy 300 slaves on credit was summarily dismissed. Deep mistrust of both the French and the Spanish, as well as uncertainty about the future, inspired this attitude.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the factors of the *asiento* in Cartagena delayed payments. 'They act deaf as soon as we attempt to get paid,' Van Beek complained. But the slave trade's demise was not as complete nor as unconditional as the governor made out to the Board. Two months after having written that letter he informed the X that the existing supply of fit slaves had almost totally been sold. 'If peace really prevails, new *armazoenen* should be sent,' he advised. 'But the ships should carry larger amounts of blacks.'<sup>56</sup>

Peace did not prevail. At the time, Van Beek did not know that Portugal, through some ingenious manoeuvring on the part of Great Britain, had deserted the Franco-Spanish camp. The Dutch governor, laboring under the assumption that she was still neutral, decided to have slavers carrying their black cargoes to the mainland under Portuguese flags. This plan had to be shelved, however, as soon as it became known which side Portugal was on.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of this set-back, the slave trade continued and sales to the mainland coast prospered unabatedly. 'I will do my utmost,' Van Beek had written earlier, 'to sell slaves. I hope that the Almighty grant us a good season.'<sup>58</sup> By now he was informed of the latest developments and was aware that the French had wrestled the *asiento* from Portugal. New French fortresses were built on the West African coast, and it was rumored that their slavers had already transported more than 1,000 blacks to the West Indies.<sup>59</sup>

#### Peace beyond the line

In Spite of the war, in spite of the change in *asiento* ownership, the Dutch West India Company continued to trade with the Spanish as if nothing had happened. While there was no peace in Europe between the United Provinces and Spain, there was peace



'beyond the line.' The Royal Portuguese African Company had closed its offices in Cartagena, the French had taken over and trade continued. Louis XIV may have said that the Pyrenees had stopped to exist, for the Dutch and the French/Spanish *asentistas* in Cartagena the war did not exist.<sup>60</sup>

This beautiful understanding between the enemies was soon undermined by the envious ally of the Dutch. 'The slave trade,' complained Van Beek, 'suffered more from the English, their supposed allies, than from their French and Spanish enemies.'<sup>61</sup> The English resented the commercial prowess of the Dutch, and by December, 1702, the Council of Trade and Plantations wrote bitterly that 'the Dutch from Curaçao drive a constant trade with the Spaniards as if there were no war.'<sup>62</sup> The British annoyance led to the accusation that 'they supply the Spaniards as well with ammunition as with provisions,' and concluded: 'We propose that directions may be given to H.M.'s Minister at The Hague to make application to the States General.'<sup>63</sup> Constant reference to this trade which evidently put out the Englishman's eyes, testify the indignation caused by the nefarious Dutch conduct. Such attacks as: 'The Dutch at Curaçao have called in all their Privateers and have free and open trade with the Spaniards far greater than ever,'<sup>64</sup> and 'Open trade of the Dutch with the Spaniards is now greater than in times of peace,'<sup>65</sup> left the Dutch behavior naked before the Council of Trade and Plantations.

The English homilies showed, as usual, certain cockiness. 'It might be worthy your Lordships' consideration about ye conniving at a Trade betwixt our people at Jamaica and the Spaniards. . . . The goods we traffick with are only wearing apparel and Negroes for their mines. . . .' revealed the crucial weakness of Great Britain's jealousy.<sup>66</sup> All this bickering revolved around the fact that the WIC and the Curaçao merchants did legally and with tacit consent of the States General what the English could not. Her Majesty's subjects were officially forbidden — in pursuance of the Declaration of War — to carry on any commerce or private correspondence with the Spanish as they previously had done. The governors of the British islands were under pressure to enforce these orders although they realized too well, that this deprived their colonies of considerable advantages. 'The Dutch have a different regard to their interest,' was their specific complaint.<sup>67</sup>

At that time the only way out of the dilemma for the British authorities was to hand out commissions to privateers to seize Dutch merchantmen who were trading with the Spaniards along



the mainland coast and bring their cargoes to Jamaica.<sup>68</sup> This meant naval warfare between the supposed allies and Governor Van Beek soon felt its pressure. 'The English', he observed, 'threaten to seize everything without any regard of flag or nation.'<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the Dutch not only lost ships but were also threatened with espionage. 'A few days ago an English privateer from Root Island [Rhode Island] dropped anchor here pretending to keelhaul his ship and to buy food,' wrote Van Beek. 'It seemed to me, however, that his real intention was to seize Curaçao barques trading along the Spanish American coast.' The governor sourly added: 'Trade will not flourish unless the English see a way to profit from it also.'<sup>70</sup> It was another version of what the Duke of Albemarle more bluntly had said four decades earlier: 'What we want is more of the Trade the Dutch now have.'<sup>71</sup> It evoked little consolation that English privateers in the Leeward group (in Dutch the Bovenwindse Eilanden) also paralyzed all trade with Danish St. Thomas.

The English, of course, tried to disguise their role as a righteous one. The Captain of an English man-of-war wrote to Van Beek: 'I am informed that there are two Dutchmen, one of 36 and the other of 42 guns, lying between Porto Cavallo and Porto Bello trading with the Spanish; being assured that their High Mightinesses, the States of Holland, would not give a commission to any Dutch ship to trade with the enemy, I find myself under the obligation to take notice of it and to warn you that if you cannot suppress it yourself I will direct myself to the English admiral and ask him to send frigates to do the job.'<sup>72</sup>

This stout-hearted language exemplified English rectitude but it compounded Van Beek's difficulties to which were added serious clashes with some members of the Curaçao *Raad* (Council), especially with the slave commissioner Gerard Luls.

In spite of these complications cash and produce from the Spanish American mainland flowed into the island.<sup>73</sup> But fear of an English interference with Dutch trade flared up when rumors circulated that the British fleet had left Jamaica. However, nothing happened and the Dutch governor, again composed, assured the Bord of X that the sale of *Piezas de India* was going well. His confidence was bolstered by the arrival of a certain Gaspar Martin. This Frenchman from Cartagena, sent by the factor-general of the new French *asiento*, came to discuss the sale of blacks and their transportation to that port. The agreement between the French and Philip V permitted the *asiento* authorities to turn to their



Dutch and English enemies and rivals for aid in furnishing them with slaves that they themselves were unable to provide.<sup>74</sup>

Van Beek — and the WIC — had no objections to selling slaves to the French *asentistas* in Cartagena. He consulted the Curaçao representatives of the *asiento* for their collaboration in circumventing British vigilance. Their hostility was reaching a peak. As early as March, 1704, they had already seized 21 Dutch ships and barques trading along the mainland coast, and brought them to Jamaica where they were declared good prizes.<sup>75</sup> In view of these difficulties the solution was found in procuring a few Danish passports and sailing the black cargo from Curaçao to Cartagena under the Danish flag. For the time being, this ruse seemed to work.<sup>76</sup>

#### English attitude

Was Van Beek really unaware of the contradictory policy of his country — a policy in which the States General unofficially backed the WIC — in fighting the French and Spanish in Europe while trading with them in the Caribbean? Although the English attitude demonstrated a curious blend of righteousness and hypocrisy, the Curaçao governor's letters show an ignorance of elementary principles which — feigned or not — bordered on insolence.<sup>77</sup>

Undoubtedly, the English threat to Dutch trade was a serious one. If Van Beek wrote humorlessly that they were many times unsuccessful in seizing Dutch traders, there was no denial of mounting tensions between the two allies and regular small-scale naval battles were fought in the area between the Curaçao islands and the mainland coast. The Curaçao governor, thus, found himself in the line of two fires. From one side the English were doing their utmost to discredit and disrupt the Dutch trade with the enemy, while on the other side the Board of X and the Chamber of Amsterdam of the WIC were sending secret orders to encourage the trade with the Spaniards. The prohibition of the Board to hand out letters of commission against the Spanish proves this point. Trade should continue, no matter under what political circumstances.

Confronted with this problem but determined to keep the trade going, the Curaçao governor introduced a 5,000 guilder security premium for the traders. It was a guarantee against any hostile Dutch action with regard to the Spaniards, thus avoiding any incentive for reciprocal enmity. Peace beyond the line was the Dutch policy. Van Beek was assured that this high premium



would steer the Dutch clear of any conflict with their business partners and not ruin the Board of X's good intentions. 'My experience in granting letters of marque,' he wrote, 'has taught me that only this amount of premium will stop merchants and sailors exporting ammunition and other war material to the enemy under the pretext of fair trade.'<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, he seemed perplexed by the peculiar situation his island was in. 'I find myself in an extremely difficult position,' he complained. 'At one side we are burdened by the complaints of our merchants that they are ruined and robbed of their profits without getting any satisfaction; at the other side I can not see that the English are completely wrong, more so because official placards — sent to me by the Chamber of Amsterdam — forbid the export of all merchandise to the enemy and the import of all French and Spanish produce. As long as the English are not profiting from the situation they will stubbornly try to stop our trade.'<sup>79</sup> The perplexed governor, therefore, asked explicit orders.

The English position was, of course, a much clearer one. In answer to a request by Governor van Beek to send back three Dutch barques taken by an English privateer, Lt. Governor Handasyde of Jamaica, a firm and honest representative of the English Crown who did not associate with any piratical acts, replied: 'I thought that the declaration of War a year ago by both the English and the Dutch against the French and the Spanish and their High Mightinesses' placards forbidding all manner of trade and commerce . . . had been notice and caution enough. Eight months ago . . . I told you if you would not stop these proceedings I would be obliged to write to England about it . . . your sloops and goods are here condemned by H.M.'s Court of Admiralty to the Crown I serve and my honour obliges me to detect such underhand practices.'<sup>80</sup>

Did this clear language dissolve Van Beek's perplexities? Despite efforts to please both sides, the Board of X was dissatisfied with the way he handled the complex situation. Moreover, his inefficient bookkeeping and the constant quarrels with his subalterns and the *Raad* gave the Board of X sufficient reason to accuse him of fraud and corrupt dealings. He was discharged of his office in 1704; his premonition of this action was evidenced by several requests for dismissal. He was replaced by Jacob Beck who after a long and dangerous voyage, arrived on the island at the end of August of that same year.<sup>81</sup>



### Effects of English privateering

The change in governor did not influence the effects of English privateering. One of their privateers, Reynier van Tongerlo, a Dutchman with an English commission from Jamaica, had seized no less than eight Dutch vessels trading along the New Granadian coast and the Caracas area. Another Dutchman, Adriaan Claver, with a commission signed by Governor Van Beek, had turned against his countrymen, seized a richly laden Dutch barque at Porto Bello, sunk it and carried its cargo to Jamaica. 'It will be highly necessary,' the new Curaçao governor wrote, 'to safeguard ourselves as much as possible from our friends and allies the English.'<sup>82</sup> He should have added: 'And from our landsmen.' His request to the Jamaica governor to stop any commissions against Dutch trade was denied. 'The procedure by which patents and commissions were granted,' the answer said, 'was exceedingly intricate and cumbersome. Each step in the complicated and varied processes was marked by a document of a particular form,' which meant, in simple language, that the English were unwilling to cooperate.<sup>83</sup>

### Change in the English attitude

Fortunately, a new load of blacks, arriving with the *Vrientschap* from Elmina in August of that same year, 1704, enabled some profitable sales with the Spaniards, which made the future look less bleak. Because of the problems involved in the transportation of those *Piezas de India* to Cartagena, the new governor, rather innocently, tried to persuade the Jamaica authorities not to interfere. He even wrote to the admiral of the English fleet there.<sup>84</sup>

These requests illustrate vividly the decline of Dutch power in the Caribbean. Even the States General were unable — or unwilling — to protect Dutch transatlantic navigation. Merchants' requests for armed protection directed to the Admiralty Board of Amsterdam and to the Provincial States of Holland and West Friesland were not granted.<sup>85</sup> There were no men-of-war available.

Well aware of their strength the English by means of a careful balance of privateering and open hostility executed their control of the Caribbean. The Dutch could hardly vindicate their position. The Curaçao merchants, quick to scrutinize the unfavorable situation, directed themselves to the *Raad*, which was powerless.



Unable to improve the situation, a group of these merchants finally decided to pay the abovementioned Van Tongerlo 8,000 *pesos* (20,000 guilders) for a written promise not to molest their ships. The three representatives of the *asiento*, questioning strongly the value of such a promise, did not contribute to this ransom. Ironically, these Ps.8,000 seemed to have originated from the seizure of a Dutch barque, the *Comercio*, seized by Van Tongerlo, but whose cargo had been graciously returned to their owners.<sup>86</sup>

But the darkest hour heralds the dawn. That crooked governor but fine psychologist, Nicolaas van Beek, had sounded the English mind fairly well. 'Trade will not flourish until the English see a way to profit from it also,' he had written at an earlier date.<sup>87</sup> The Council of Trade and Plantations was fully aware of the disadvantages for the English colonies if there were a complete break in trade relations with the Spanish enemy. In October, 1703, it wrote to the Queen regarding the Dutch position, and 'the great discouragement Her Majesty's subjects in the West Indies and the home country experienced because of the prohibition.'<sup>88</sup> A circular letter, entitled *Reasons Against Prohibiting Trade and Commerce with Spain in the West Indies* made it clear that 'such prohibition of commerce with the Spaniards would be no less prejudicial to Great Britain... That will debar us from vending our native commodities to them for pieces of eight or other valuable goods... it will throw our part of the Spanish trade into the hands of the Dutch who have several Plantations near the Spanish coast, that although they may have a formal direction of the States General on whom it is well known, they have little dependence when the interest of Trade prevails in parts so remote as the West Indies.'<sup>89</sup> Thus, the tide was beginning to turn.

In answer to protests made in The Hague by the British envoy, the States General presented the Queen with a memorandum pointing out the reasons why the Dutch were allowed to trade with the Spanish.<sup>90</sup> The Queen, upon consideration of the English and Dutch position, thereupon changed her attitude. By now she thought fit 'to continue the trade and commerce with the Spaniards in those parts during the war, in all commodities excepting stores of war and ammunition and such commodities as are prohibited by law to be carried from Her Majesty's Plantations directly to any foreign country.'<sup>91</sup> The English were now permitted to carry on this trade and orders were given not to molest 'any of the Dutch in their trade', except in the case of carry-



ing stores or ammunition of war. They were admonished to take care 'that the French receive no benefit of this indulgence.'<sup>92</sup>

As a result of this order all hostilities with the Spaniards in America were ceased. The position of the Dutch was now looked up to and their policy practised. The Additional *Instruction to Privateers* shows the enormous change in attitude adopted by the English. 'Whereas we in conjunction with our allies the States General are willing to encourage our and their intercourse with such of the Spanish Nation as shall be inclined to acknowledge the title and sovereignty of Charles III, King of Spain, with whom we are in friendship and alliance.' At this point the chances of the Archduke to the Spanish throne seemed excellent, causing Louis XIV to fear that Charles would rally the Spaniards to his support. The moment seemed opportune to follow less rigid regulations.<sup>93</sup>

This sensational turnaround of Great Britain's trade policy in the West Indies posed no problem for her governors who were well aware of the damages caused by the former attitude. Even that vociferous critic of the Dutch, Governor Thomas Handsyde,<sup>94</sup> could soon write triumphantly: 'Several of our trading sloops have already been trading with the Spaniards... they might have an extra-ordinary trade.'<sup>95</sup> This signaled the end of the English harassment of Dutch trade along the mainland coast. Now, although the Dutch got rid of the British privateering nuisance, they gained a powerful competitor.

#### The French challenge

The new English role opened a second phase in the Caribbean, that of the French challenge. In the three years that followed, French privateers delivered several blows to the West India Company bringing it almost to the brim of bankruptcy.

Few slavers had dropped anchor in Curaçao during the years of the English obstruction, but at the end of 1704 two safely arrived at Willemstad, followed in the beginning of 1705 by a third one. The demand for slaves was great and could not even be satisfied with 2,000 more blacks, especially if they originated from Ardra. These were particularly in demand.

Encouraged by these profitable prospects the Curaçao governor tried to convince the board of X to fit out more *toerbeurten*. Not yet knowing the real reason for the diminishing English raids on Dutch shipping, he attributed their less aggressive attitude to the safeguards he had taken to protect his island's trade. These con-



sisted of specially equipped cruisers for the purpose of shielding the business relations with the Spanish American mainland. In order to finance this measure Beck created a special fund, the so-called *kaapvaartkas* (privateering fund), by raising a special duty of 1 percent on all imports with the explicit object to pay for the extra expenses. Not only were the imports from the mother country taxed but also the merchandise brought into the island by Dutch, English, or other privateers.<sup>96</sup>

This fund seemed to fulfill its purpose. Although the end of English privateering on the Dutch was not a result of the activities of the Dutch cruisers equipped by the *kaapvaartkas*, they certainly limited French aggression and performed well even seizing French corsairs 'with vigor and valor' bringing them to Willemstad. Somewhat later, in 1706, the Admiralty Board of Amsterdam, which previously had refused all help, probably realizing the seriousness of the French threat, now declared itself willing to give convoy to the ships of the WIC and the Caribbean navigators with two men-of-war twice a year. For this service it asked 2½ percent as incoming and 3 percent as outgoing duties on cargoes destined for or leaving the Dutch port.<sup>97</sup> In 1707, a first convoy arrived at Curaçao protected by two men-of-war, and since that year up till the 20th century, with only a few interruptions, Curaçao's port always harbored these so-called station-ships.

At the end of 1705 more slavers arrived. Around that time Governor Beck also received orders to raise the price of the *Piezas de India* from 100 to 108 *pesos*. The Board had two reasons for this raise. The blacks at Fida became increasingly scarce, while also the great demand of the Spanish mainland colonies lured the Board away from the lower price. However, both Governor Beck and slave commissioner Luls were concerned that this would turn prospective buyers to Jamaica and St. Thomas where slaves, it was rumored, could be obtained at prices as low as 80 of 90 *pesos* a *Pieza de India*. Furthermore, the buyer in Curaçao who paid in coined gold or silver would really pay 115 instead of 108 *pesos*, due to the scarcity of cash which raised its value around 7 percent. Aware of this danger, the Board of X authorized the governor to sell the blacks, if necessary at the more convenient price of 106 *pesos*, suggesting also a public sale for the *Piezas de India*.<sup>98</sup>

Governor Beck, already opposed to a raise in price, pointed out that a public auction of the *Piezas de India* would be effective only when there was a small quality of superior blacks and plenty of buyers. Besides having no high quality slaves the buyers were



mostly Spaniards, the English and French islands being closed to Dutch trade. Those Spaniards, Beck wrote with typical nordic phlegm, were not easy to deal with. Being used to a certain way of trading they would be disinclined to adapt other methods. He was sure they would refuse to appear at public sales.<sup>99</sup>

In 1706, several slavers having miraculously escaped the threat of French privateering in an expanding war dropped anchor at Willemstad. Although the price of blacks had gone up considerably, they were sold immediately, *Piezas de India, mancquerons*, and sick slaves.

Besides the French privateers and the interlopers or *lorredraaiers* who hampered the WIC slave trade, the governor was faced with another irritating though small problem. Many captains of the Company's slavers constantly tried to smuggle one or two blacks into Curaçao on the pretext that they had received them as a present from the negro ruler back in Africa. The WIC repeatedly gave strict orders to confiscate those blacks and sell them for the Company. The captain of the *Son*, for instance, in a request to Governor Beck, tried to keep two slaves, claiming them, as usual, as a present. He failed and the two youngsters were confiscated and added to the ship's *armazoen*.<sup>99</sup>

#### More confusion

While at that time the Allied forces made excellent progress in Europe and the chances of the Archduke Charles of Austria to mount the Spanish throne seemed better than ever, the situation in the Caribbean became considerably more confused. The Governor of Curaçao was ordered not to hand out any commission against the Carlista Spanish, but to confiscate all Spanish ships with a commission signed by Philip, considered 'enemies of the United Provinces.'<sup>100</sup> At the same time the aggravation of the war caused the WIC heavy losses which dealt severe blows against its financial stability. Several slavers never arrived, seized or sunk by the French. No dividend was paid in 1705 and 1706, but in 1707 the Board of X, after much hesitation finally decided to have a *uitdelinghe* (dividend), not paid, however, in cash but in additional stocks amounting to 5 percent of the investment. In face of the severe setbacks of the Company, this decision probably was an effort to stimulate the investors' morale and to gain support from the government in its difficult plight.<sup>101</sup>

By the close of 1707 and at the beginning of 1708 more slavers brought relief, sometimes unloading blacks from the African



coast, the less desirable ones. Nevertheless, they were all immediately sold, again reflecting the pressing demand.<sup>102</sup>

As a result of the scarcity of commodities and blacks some peculiar consequences developed. All European colonies, laced in a set of rules and regulations, were forbidden any inter-colonial trade. Now, however, with the irregularity of supplies from their mother countries contraband activities flourished. Governors and other officials of the British islands, for instance, admitted that their own people were involved as heavily as the Dutch in smuggling. This complaint became a topic in the correspondence between the English officials and the Council of Trade and Plantations. 'Curaçao is never without Bermuda vessels,' wrote Lt. Governor Bennett. Another letter gives many details about the illegal trade between Jamaica, Curaçao, and St. Thomas.<sup>103</sup> In vain governors and proprietors were admonished to take all precautions to discharge it.

Could it be that the English colonies suffered more from the effects of the war than the Dutch or the French? Governor Handasyde of Jamaica often complained about 'the deadness of our trade to the Spanish coast.'<sup>104</sup> This deadness seemed also to have reached Barbados. In September, 1708, some merchants from this island, who had their eyes on the future, petitioned the Queen to promote the trade with the Spanish West Indies through acquisition of the *asiento* which 'may be of such advantage to this Kingdom and to Your Majesty's Plantations.'<sup>105</sup> Indeed, being excluded from this profitable business made it easier for Great Britain to dress herself in a cloak of honesty and morality. But English jealousy was minute compared to previous years, and thus the Curaçao governor and the WIC were not overly concerned. They were faced with another complication which opened another era in the Curaçao slave trade. This was French willingness to open official trade relations, a proposition which caused some embarrassment and much caution.

#### The Chourio episode

Late in 1707, the Chamber of Amsterdam received a curious request from two Jewish merchants, the brothers Louis and Jean Mendes da Costa, for permission to conclude a contract with the French Company of Saint Domingue for the delivery of three or four shiploads of blacks. They offered a cash sum of 30,000 guilders for each shipload (12,000 *pesos*) while the remaining 30,000 guilders would be paid in commodities and merchandise upon



delivery.<sup>106</sup> The Board of X, somewhat put out by this request, postponed a decision to its next meeting. The petition was then denied.

More serious contact was made in early 1708. Arriving from La Guaira, a certain Monsieur Chourio asked for an audience with the Curaçao governor. He was — as Luls, the slave commissioner, commented — the son of the Spanish consul at Amsterdam and had lived in Martinique, before representing the French *asiento* of Cartagena. Beck, somewhat distrustful, requested that two members of the *Raad* be present.<sup>107</sup>

Chourio, showing the Dutch officials his commission as *asentista* for Trinidad, Margarita, Cumaná, and Maracaibo, allegedly signed by Philip V, told them that it granted him the right to buy slaves for these colonies in Jamaica as well as in Curaçao. As already observed, the French *asiento* did indeed contain a clause permitting these dealings with the enemy. The Frenchman went even further to reveal the unique possibilities of the *asiento* agreement. It could be extremely profitable and feasible, he explained, to include other commodities in their commercial relationship. The Spanish colonial mainland was in dire need of many things. Therefore, he proposed direct and regular communication between Curaçao and Venezuela. The mainland would pay in cash and produce for blacks and other merchandise. There was, however, a catch to his offer. It would be necessary for Chourio to establish residency on the island and open an office there.<sup>108</sup> The number of blacks needed could easily amount to 1000 *Piezas de India* yearly. The question concerning the transportation of these goods and blacks to the Spanish mainland was easily solved, although both parties realized that the English would be very watchful. His licence, Chourio assured Beck, required that each ship should be manned with at least half French crews.<sup>109</sup>

Regular visits of French and Spanish sailors would, of course, create a dangerous possibility for espionage and treason. After all, a war was going on. Who would be able to tell if a sailor was not a spy in disguise? The feelings of the *Raad*, called together to discuss this extra-ordinary proposal, were far from unanimous. No option was barred from discussion, however, not even that of French sailors being admitted in Willemstad's port. While the *Raad* deliberated, Chourio, proving that he meant business, bought enough merchandise, partly on credit, to send a sloop to Maracaibo. Governor Beck, moving effectively to counteract any



efforts against the French *asentista*, sold him 65 inferior blacks for the full price of 108 *pesos* a piece. At long last the *Raad* granted the Frenchman a temporary permit to stay depending on the final approval of the Board of X.<sup>110</sup>

Now the Curaçao governor was in bad need of *armazoenen*. Luckily, at the end of 1708, two slavers dropped anchor at Willemstad unloading almost 650 blacks. Chourio bought more than 200 at the regular price of 108 *pesos*. He paid in cash and cacao.<sup>111</sup> Another French buyer, from Saint Domingue, also bought a number of blacks.

The successful arrival of these two slavers was dampened by the disappearance of a third one, seized by the French privateers almost in sight of Curaçao.

#### The *Raad* and Chourio

At the end of 1708, Governor Beck asked for his dismissal, and was replaced by his brother Abraham Beck. Jeremias van Collen, the commissioner of *train en vivres* (material and vivres), who had acted as temporary governor after Van Beek's dismissal now again functioned as such. When Abraham Beck died in October, 1710, Van Collen became acting governor for the third time. Descendent of a well known Amsterdam regent family, very influential in the affairs of the WIC, he was in spite of this background overlooked two times for the highest position of the island. Finally, after his third acting governorship the Board appointed him governor on December 17, 1711. He served as such until his death in January, 1715.<sup>112</sup>

Van Collen had been strongly in favor of Chourio's proposals but his hands were tied. He had to wait for the decision of the Board of X. It came at the end of May, 1709, while he was still acting governor, and took half a year to reach his hands, eloquently illustrating the slow rhythm of communication of those days. To the great astonishment of the acting governor and the majority of the *Raad*, it contained strict orders to forbid Chourio or his staff to reside on the island. Should they already have established an office there, he and his aids should be arrested, sent back to the mainland, and their belongings in commodities, blacks, and cash be confiscated.<sup>113</sup>

The *Raad* member Laurentius Horst, a medical doctor, had already very outspokenly demonstrated his anti-French feelings. Clearly, he said, the French were planning to spy on Dutch shipping. The admission, according to Horst, of 'mortal enemies of



the United Provinces' could only cause commotion, detriment, and disaster.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, his voice was not heeded until the French had seized the WIC slaver *St. Jago* just as it entered Curaçao's port. Indignant and upset, the Curaçao merchants then accused Chourio and his staff of having been instrumental in this seizure with their espionage.

The decision of the Board was not inspired by a lofty effort to curb the trade with the enemy. Shortly later, during Abraham Beck's term, the Board issued specific orders to continue the trade with the mainland and to treat the Spaniards with 'civility.'<sup>115</sup> An additional recommendation approved the admission of Spanish ships in Curaçao's port bringing their produce in exchange for slaves.<sup>116</sup> Torn between lust for profit and fear of treason the Curaçao governor was not always sure which course to follow. But the continuous losses of Dutch navigation in the Carribbean, as well as on the African coast, clearly proved the existence of informers. At that time, in 1709, around 150 Frenchmen of various professions lived in Curaçao.<sup>117</sup>

Chourio was in Venezuela at the time the Board's order for his arrest had arrived. Pending his return his property was seized: a barque *La Royale* with 40 blacks, another one, *La Diligence*, and a bergantine, *Le Postillon*, with 25 *Piezas de India*. Fifty *Piezas de India*, purchased but not yet delivered and residing on the WIC plantation Rooy Canario, were also confiscated. Furthermore, 30 *mancquerons* and sick slaves kept on the plantation of Gerard Luls — probably his reason to permit Chourio on the island — were taken into custody.<sup>118</sup>

Chourio, it soon appeared, was deep in debt most of which he owed to the WIC which claimed 15,000 *pesos*, while he owed another 10,000 *pesos* to various merchants. Upon his arrival in Curaçao, soon afterwards, he was arrested together with his staff of 32 members. The arrest was a mild one, the Frenchman being confined to his quarters in Punda (the walled-in section of Willemstad). He declared himself innocent of the charge of espionage and repeated this in a session of the Raad to which he was invited.

His high debts made it impractical to extradite him immediately. After long deliberations the Raad finally admitted the Frenchman again, in flagrant contradiction of the Board's orders. He endeared himself even more to the commercial interests of the island by buying 330 *Piezas de India* from the Company at the



fixed price, and commodities from many Curaçao merchants amounting to 40,000 *pesos*, claiming that he would have bought much more had he not suffered huge losses in Maracaibo where the authorities had confiscated 50,000 *pesos* worth of property.<sup>119</sup>

Van Collen's interpretation of the Board's orders was a peculiar one, but a majority of the *Raad* supported his views: arrested, Chourio would be paralyzed and never be able to pay his debts. The prosperity of the Company and many island merchants was at stake. When Abraham Beck arrived and was confronted with this situation, he accepted the official position. It was taken, he wrote the Board, to give all Chourio's creditors an opportunity to hand in their claims, to give the Frenchman an opportunity to do business and pay his debts, and to gather more information about his involvement in the seizure of the *St. Jago* and several other Dutch ships.<sup>120</sup>

With the adhesion of the *Raad* the French thus were absolved of any misdemeanors, treason, or damaging correspondence. Both Van Collen — who even issued a Declaration to this effect — and Abraham Beck had the support of some Curaçao merchants, in particular of the Curaçao *asentistas*. One of them, David Senior, was even willing to pay a guarantee of 5,000 *pesos* in cash or bonds (*bodemerij brieven*) in order to permit Chourio to export 70 blacks to Maracaibo, offering as security his house in the Jodenkerkstraat (Punda), together with 20 slaves.<sup>121</sup>

But not all Curaçao merchants shared this point of view as proven by a request of many businessmen protesting the admission of Spanish ships (among them Chourio's of the French *asiento*) into Willemstad's port. The Spanish had been doing this freely ever since the English acquiesced to the Dutch-Spanish trade. By now, however, these merchants were getting second thoughts and realized the detrimental effects this admission had on their own business. The Spanish brought produce from the mainland at competitive prices, and as a result the governor was now petitioned for restrictions of this free entry.<sup>122</sup>

Since Governor Beck was making an inspection tour to Bonaire, Van Collen presided over the meeting of the *Raad* in which this request was discussed together with Chourio's protest against the confiscation of his barques. Taking an opposite view from earlier debates he now urged the *Raad* not to grant Chourio any favors, to sell all his property in public auction so that his debt to the Company could be settled. Then he should be extradited.



This attitude only took into account the interests of the WIC and disregarded Chourio's involvement with the Curaçao merchants. The slave trade commissioner Luls took their side. The *Raad* — in which some merchants had seats — agreed with Luls and permitted the *Postillon* to sell its blacks and other commodities in Maracaibo. This decision had the strong approval of all of Chourio's creditors who supported Luls' attitude and the decision of the *Raad* 'so that he will be able to pay us.'<sup>123</sup>

The following balance sheet makes the importance of the *Raad*'s decision obvious. It shows the involvement of some prominent Curaçao merchants and the commodities of Chourio's transactions:<sup>124</sup>

## CHOURIO &amp; CHAMBERT

## DEBENT

Schuurman en Moyaert	Ps. 271.2.5
David and Isaac Senior	4.000
Mord. de Castro	694.4.2
Idem persatilo	2.989.1
Ferro and Nara	9.5.4
Manuel Alvares Correo	155.2.
Eli Gilbert	818.7.5
Joan de Nis	200
De Ed <sup>e</sup> Comp.	15.356
Brandau and Bundes	275
David Lopes Dias	566. .3
Freeze & Otto	166.6.2
	<hr/>
	Ps. 25.502. 3
David Senior of the security	5.000
	<hr/>
	Ps. 30.502.6.3

## CREDUNT

For a bar gold in cash in custody of the governor	Ps. 1.748.6.
For security of D <sup>d</sup> Senior	5.000
For 60.000 11 cassave	7.200
For barrels of indigo	250
For 2 barques ( <i>Postillon</i> and <i>Royale</i> )	2.400
For 34 blacks	3.400
For Flemish striped linen	350
For 108 barrels flour	800
For the auctioneer	271
For Jacob Kamp	1.636
For Jeronimo Juyst	100
	<hr/>
	Ps. 23.155.6
Compt. per saldo of this a shortage of	7.347 - .3
	<hr/>
	Ps. 30.502.6.3



A similar procedure was followed regarding Nicolas Gautier, the Frenchman from Saint Domingue, whose debts to the Company amounted to 4212 *pesos*. His property was also seized after it had become apparant that information about Dutch shipping was leaked to some privateers cruising around Hispaniola. As in the days of the English harassments, the *kaapvaartkas* was again used for the equipment of several armed barques for surveillance and protection.<sup>125</sup>

The Curaçao merchants, in the meantime, still apprehensive, requested to postpone the sailing date of a convoy waiting in St. Ann Bay. Sure enough, at the end of 1709, news came that the French had taken St. Eustatius and were cruising between Mona and Puerto Rico waiting for a Curaçao convoy.<sup>126</sup>

Undisturbed by these rumors, Chourio offered to buy 1500 blacks if the *Raad* would permit one of his barques into Willemstad's port. Strong opposition denied this request and Chourio was ordered to pay his creditors and leave the island at first notice. But the astute Frenchman, never at the end of his wits, asked for a hearing and his appearance in the *Raad* worked wonders. He assured the members that his three barques — if set free — would return from the mainland loaded with food. Because of an extremely dry season and the threatening scarcity of victuals the *Raad*, albeit reluctantly, granted the request in spite of strong protest from many Curaçao merchants. The latter were loosing ship after ship and were far from happy.<sup>127</sup>

Although there does not appear to be enough concrete basis for the imputations of the merchants, it is questionable of Governor Beck followed a wise course in granting Chourio his request. There was no guarantee that his crews would not sail straight to Martinique or inform the French privateers swarming around the island of Dutch shipping schedules. The food situation was, however, extremely pressing. Food was the island's Achilles heel. Its desertlike climate did not promote agriculture. Beck had already bought 10,000 bushel of corn after cattle started to die. Everyone knew that the slaves were next in line to feel the squeeze of food scarcity: break-ins and burglary, mainly in search of food, became daily occurrences. In August, 1710, a long trial against two of the most notorious thieves triggered more unrest. Both were convicted and hanged. The slave population manifested open hostility, and the placards issued by a frightened governor reflected the growing official concern.<sup>128</sup>



## Collapsing prosperity

In the midst of these tensions the war situation worsened. The threat of the French enemy and the English ally increased. A French corsair, for instance, seized 27 blacks on Bonaire without meeting any resistance. They captured also the slaver *Amsterdam* on its way from Fida to Curaçao. Its captain had given up only after a gallant fight of three hours. Beck advised the Board to send new instructions to the Caribbean navigators that they should not enter this dangerous area south of Tobago. His advice was heeded.<sup>129</sup>

Great losses in slavers and other ships intensified the economic and political squeeze Curaçao was experimenting. Not before September 1710, did the first *armazoen* of that year arrive. Nothing was known of the slaver *Moscow* nor of the *Africa*. The heavy losses were only partially compensated by the arrival of the *Carolus Secundus* but this slaver arrived in a completely desolate condition, damaged to such a degree that Governor Beck set 10,000 *pesos* aside for immediate repairs.<sup>130</sup>

The collapsing prosperity of the island forced the Curaçao merchants once again to request the governor to put a close watch on all foreigners, especially the French. Freedom of movement for them clearly appeared to be unwise, dangerous, and unrealistic. Refraining from direct accusations the merchants again hinted that information had been given out about Dutch shipping schedules.<sup>131</sup>

Naturally, the governor and the *Raad* were sincerely concerned about these complaints. But trade was declining rapidly, and more obstacles in its way would result in more deterioration. Unwilling to remain passive, Chourio had the audacity to reappear unexpectedly in the midst of this crisis, and proposed a new deal for the delivery of blacks. If his suggestions were accepted, he assured the governor, he would take care of the transportation by using ships under Dutch or Spanish flags, and he would not reside on the island.<sup>132</sup>

Acting Governor Van Collen, again revising his former attitude and strongly inclined to improve the bad economic situation, attempted to persuade the *Raad* to restore the broken relationship with the French. A majority of votes finally decided in favor of Chourio's proposals, depending, of course, on the final approval



of the Board. He was, however, not allowed to settle on the island. Consequently, Chourio, renting a brigantine from Philip Henriques, one of the Curaçao representatives of the French *asiento*, sailed to Coro under the Dutch flag returning a few days later with 40,000 *pesos* in cash. Boasting that he could use 3000 blacks, he arranged his affairs with the island's firm Freeze & Otto which committed itself to the delivery of 400 *Piezas de India* and received Chourio's power of attorney, while the Frenchman deposited 6000 *pesos* as a down payment. The remaining 34,000 were spent on purchases from many Curaçao merchants. In this way the cunning Frenchman endeared himself to the merchants and involved himself strongly in the island's economy. But hostility flared again when several French stowaways were discovered in the ship that had brought Chourio to Curaçao. The *Raad* members Rudolphus Horst and Pieter de Senilh captain lieutenant of the island's militia, openly voiced their mistrust and suspicion.<sup>133</sup>

#### More difficulties for Curaçao

In the summer of that same year 1711 Curaçao was again faced with a critical food shortage. Moreover, Van Collen learned that the French were making preparations for an offensive against Curaçao. Luckily, the year passed without a French attack but no slavers arrived either except for one. Business with Chourio fell flat. Only the leftover blacks from previous *armazoenen* were for sale. Forty were finally sold in exchange for cacao and sent to Maracaibo.

As governors before him, Van Collen threw much of the blame for the island's declining trade on the activity of French and English privateers. They found, he wrote, a worthy ally in 'a monstrous governor' of the Caracas area, who 'was in the service of Philip V, a descendant of the Moors, very cruel and malicious' who had already killed more than 20 merchants accused of trading with the Dutch.<sup>135</sup>

At the end of April, 1712, the first slaver in almost a year and a half, arrived in Willemstad, gladly welcomed with its 570 blacks of which Chourio purchased 358. By now the sale of 'living ebony' had become, for a great part, dependent on the French of the mainland coast and Saint Domingue. Chourio, well aware of this situation, showed himself no longer very pliable and requested the circumvention of recently set rules, threatening to buy his blacks in St. Thomas or Jamaica if the Company did not comply.



The Board, for instance, had again ordered to sell all blacks, also the *Piezas de India*, in public auction, and Chourio refused to bid. The governor was in a bind between the orders of the Board and the Frenchman's adamant attitude. He consulted the new slave trade commissioner, Willem de Bij, the successor of Luls who had died, and decided to bend the new rules a little. The Board later approved his decision.<sup>136</sup>

Such difficulties, if hardly conducive to excessive optimism, were minor irritants at best. The attack of Jacques Cassard in February, 1713, made a much deeper impact. It led to the payment of a ransom of 115,000 *pesos* 'in cash, commodities, and slaves.' Fortunately, the blacks of two slavers, which had arrived before this disaster, had already been sold, thus limiting the share of the Company in this ransom to 12,000 *pesos*. While the islanders and the new slave trade commissioner hopefully waited for the arrival of new slavers to recuperate from the heavy blow the French had delivered, news arrived that the first one expected had been wrecked.<sup>137</sup>

#### The English *Asiento*

The Peace of Utrecht, concluded in 1713, filled the Board of X with high hopes for a revival of the slave trade. The *asiento* agreement — rumors said — was not yet firmly settled, and existing Dutch suspicions of deceitful tactics of the ally had not yet assumed a profile of certainty. Somewhat naively, the Board expected the profits of the slave trade to be just around the corner. At Curaçao, the arrival of the slaver *St. Marcus*, in January, 1714, seemed to affirm those blissful expectations. Chourio purchased 511 of its *armazoen* of 556 surviving blacks, eloquent proof how much Curaçao now depended on the trade with the French. Highly optimistic, Chourio also made claims on the next *armazoen*. Little did he know that France, for peace's sake, might sacrifice the *asiento* and grant it to the English. The Board of the WIC worked under the same false assumptions. By the time the next slaver, the *Coninginne Hester* (Queen Esther) dropped anchor in Willemstad, a dramatic change in the slave trade had taken place.

Despite the alarming rumors of an English *asiento*, Governor Van Collen refused to see the handwriting on the wall, and was equally eloquent to denounce the disastrous consequences which a possible loss of the slave trade would carry for the Company. Living under the preposterous assumption that profits still could



be reaped from sales to Cartagena, the Porto Bello region and the Caracas coast, he could not see the cold reality of the facts. The Dutch, he believed, could still control much of the trade; they still had a strong position on Africa's West coast, and an excellent market in the regions mentioned. Strengthening the island's defense system would maintain this grasp on the slaving business.<sup>138</sup>

The commissioner of the slave trade, De Bij, did not suffer from such grave misconceptions. The slave trade in the Guianas, Leeward-, Windward Islands, and Hispaniola had fallen under the control of the English, he wrote, while the mainland coast had become the scene of a losing struggle between the interlopers of many nations. He expressed considerable concern, and the arrival of the *Conginne Hester* with a very pityful armazoen did not improve his views. Chourio, well aware that the *asiento* was slipping away from him, bought only 88 blacks which were sent to La Guaira where only 17 were sold. The French were finished and Chourio knew it. He brought the depressing news to Curaçao that the official installation of the English representative of the *asiento* would be only a matter of time.<sup>139</sup> It also rung the death-bell for the Curaçao slave trade.

Because of the great distance between the mother country and the Curaçao colony, the subsequent slowness of communication, and the organization of *toerbeurten* a year ahead of time, slavers continued to arrive. The Board of X had equipped at least seven slavers for the year 1715. Only four arrived at Curaçao, the fate of the other three remaining a mystery. These four brought over 1000 blacks, but Chourio had left, and the new *asentistas* along the coast did not want to get involved in trade with the Dutch. The Curaçao slave trade commissioner wrote in July, 1715: 'I must tell your Lordships to my deep sorrow that we don't have any buyers for them.'<sup>140</sup>

Over 1000 extra blacks to feed this distressing situation on the desert island was contributed by the Curaçao officials mainly to the English. True, the interlopers had increased their activity and sold their blacks cheaper, but the English added, as De Bij wrote, insult to injury by allowing the Spaniards to use English flags to seize all Dutch traders along the coast.<sup>141</sup>

The Peace of Utrecht meant an English victory in the Caribbean, not so much over the French enemy as over the Dutch ally: the disastrous end for the Dutch of another Anglo-Dutch war. The ruin of the WIC now seemed imminent. What could be done



to avoid it? Van Collen died in January, 1715, thus escaping the misery of a demoralizing catastrophe. The English had the men, the ships, the power, and the arrogance. After a century of warring against the Dutch, they had finally finished them, and would soon embark on their next goal: the elimination of French competition. The Dutch, with the Peace of Utrecht, after having been a worldpower for almost a century, became provincial and second rate.

Van Collen nor the slave trade commissioner De Bij had the answers to the company's problems. They were at loss. Did the Board of X know a solution? It was fully aware of the deteriorating state of affairs but did it have a clear insight in its causes? At the beginning of the war, in its session of November 13, 1702, it had stated that 'the slave trade has always been considered the leading trade of the Company'.<sup>142</sup> In its session of December 5, 1711, extremely troubled about the fate of the Company, its members listened to a memorandum of one of the directors, Cornelis Bors van Waveren representing the Chamber of Amsterdam, who 'with regard to the critical constitution of the Chartered West India Company of these countries' proposed a reorganisation. Van Waveren attributed the Company's decline to various causes: the war, the English role in their competition with the Dutch, but principally the inefficient internal organization which he considered to be obsolete. 'In the multitude of Chambers consists all mischief,' were his words. Consequently, he suggested the elimination of the Board of X and all the Company's chambers, except the Amsterdam one, which owned already 4/9 of the capital. The liquidated chambers would be integrated in the Amsterdam chamber which, thus, would acquire a broader basis. A new presidium of ten directors would head this chamber, four representing Amsterdam, two Zeeland, and one member for each of the other liquidated chambers. A tenth member would rotate between several provinces and cities. The immediate savings in overhead, Bors van Waveren concluded, amounted to at least *f* 40,000 yearly.<sup>145</sup>

Naturally, this proposal irritated the Zeelandian members of the Board of X. In another meeting, two years later, they reacted correspondingly. In stead of a reorganization a merger with the prosperous Dutch East India Company was proposed. Eloquently, the advantages of such a merger were brought to the attention of the Board.<sup>144</sup>

As usual no decision was reached and the Company tottered



forward into a dark future without any sense of direction or goal.<sup>145</sup>

It seems correct to conclude that after 1716 the slave trade of the WIC went definitely downhill. The War of the Spanish Succession and the English *Asiento* delivered the death blow.

#### NOTES

CSP = Calendar of State Papers. NWIC = Nieuwe West-Indische Compagnie.  
CTP = Council of Trade and Plantations.

1. Frank Taylor, *The Wars of Marlborough, 1702-1709*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1921, 2 vols., I 83

2. Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, Washington, Carnegie Institution, 1931, 4 vols., II, xiii.

3. Taylor, I, p. 57.

4. John E. Emerich, First Baron Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, London, MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1906, p. 252.

5. Frances Gardiner Davonport, ed. *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, Washington, Carnegie Institution, vol. III, 1934, p. 29.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

7. Georges Scelle, *La Traite négrière aux Indes de Castile*, Paris, L. Larose, L. Tenin, 1906, 2 vols., II, 97.

8. Jonathan Swift, *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen in The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, Temple Scott ed., London.

9. Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, *Letters and Correspondence*, G.G. and J. Robinson, London, 2 vols., I, p. 48.

10. *Ibid.*, I, p. 95.

11. *Ibid.*, I, p. 118.

12. Davonport, III, p. 141. The French were still negotiating with the Dutch behind the scene.



13. Bolingbroke, I, p. 186.
14. Davonport, III, p. 148. Bolingbroke, I, 235.
15. Davonport, III, p. 152.
16. Bolingbroke, I, p. 235.
17. Davonport, III, p. 123.
18. Acton, p. 262.
19. Calendar of State Papers (CSP) XVIII, 1700, p. 656, November 15.
20. CSP XVIII, 1700, p. 106 (190) March 6.
21. CSP XVIII, 1700, p. 658 (936). Gov. Randolph to Council of Trade and Plantations (CTP), Nov. 15.
22. CSP XVIII, 1700, p. 680 (953); XIX, 1701, p. 128 (251), p. 238 (436); XXIV, 1708-1709, p. 169 (226), p. 388 (597), *et passim*.
23. CSP XXVI, 1711-12, p. 245 (345). Gov. Lord A. Hamilton to CTP, March 18, 1712.
24. CSP XXIII, 1706, p. 280 (524). Gov. Handasyde of Jamaica to CTP, June 10.
25. CSP XX, 1702, p. 5 (6). CTP to the Earl of Nottingham.
26. CSP XXIV, 1708-1709, p. 506 (831). Peter Holt to Capt. William Billton, Oct. 26, 1709.
27. CSP XVIII, 1700, p. 82 (154). Gov. E. Randolph to CTP, April 10. See also p. 154 (303) and p. 328 (524).
28. CSP XX, 1702, p. 415 (648). Col. Quarry in answer to Mr. Penn's complaints, June 23.
29. CSP XX, 1702, p. 402 (634). Paper by Major Gen. Selwyn, later Governor of Jamaica.
30. CSP XIX, 1701, p. 327 (600). Gov. Codrington to CTP, June 30.
31. *Ibid.*
32. CSP XX, 1702, p. 226 (342). W. Popple to Charlewood Lawton, April 16.
33. CSP XXII, 1704-1705, p. 308 (643). Lord Cornbury to CTP, Nov. 6 and CSP XX, 1702, p. 611 (999). Lord Cornbury to CTP, Sept. 27.



34. Donnan, II, pp. 272, 291.
35. Johannes Postma, *The Dutch Participation in the African Slave Trade*, Michigan State University, Ph.D., 1970; University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, p. 117.
36. *Ibid.* p. 118.
37. *Ibid.* In the WIC documents this company is referred to also as the Royal Portuguese African Company or the Portuguese Guinea Company.
38. Philip D. Curtin, *The African Slave Trade*.
39. We put these numbers together from Postma, pp. 231-33.
40. *Ibid.* These numbers do not take into account the deathrate aboard the slavers during the mid passage.
41. NWIC 200, fol. 43. Gerard Luls to the Board, Aug. 3, 1700.
42. Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast 1580-1680*, Gainesville, University of Florida Press, p. 362.
43. In 1700 this three-men committee was composed of Lucas Hansen, Jan Moyaert and Jacob Calvo. The representatives of the *asiento* at Curaçao were, at that time, Johan Goetvriendt, Philip Henriques and David Senior.
44. NWIC 200, fol. 167-68.
45. Postma, pp. 198 and 63.
46. To overcome these obstacles the Board of X decided, October 18, 1701, to equip a special ship with a *cargazoen* worth 80,000 guilders to purchase blacks 'like the interlopers'. The experiment failed. See NWIC 1, fol. 56.
47. NWIC 200, fols. 66-67.
48. NWIC 1, fol. 3.
49. For the experiences of these ships see NWIC 200, fols. 160-61 and 184. The three slavers were the *Croonvogel*, the *Faam* and the *West Indische Huis*. Jorge Palacios Preciado, *La Trata de Negros por Cartagena de Indias*, Tunja, Fondo Especial de Publicaciones, Ediciones 'La Rana y El Aguila,' 1973, p. 101, mentions only the *Faam* (*La Fama*) with an *armazoen* of 433 blacks, and the *Croonvogel* (*El Págaro Coronado*) with 406 blacks.
50. Davonport, III, p. 40.
51. NWIC 200, fols. 115-16. Van Beek to Board of X, June 21, 1701.
52. NWIC 200, fols. 155 ff.



53. NWIC 200, fols. 226-27.
54. NWIC 1, fol. 81. Board session of Nov. 7, 1701; and 200, fols. 270-72, Van Beek to Board of X, April 4, 1702. The *asentistas* of Cartagena were over 12,000 *pesos* behind in payments due to the WIC.
55. NWIC 200, fols. 269-72. Van Beek to Board of X, April 4, 1702.
56. NWIC 200, fols. 340 ff. Van Beek to Board of X, June 30, 1702, and fols. 334-37, Van Beek to Board of X, April 24, 1702.
57. NWIC 200, fols. 375 ff. Van Beek to Board of X, Sept. 22, 1702.
58. *Ibid.*, fol. 376.
59. NWIC 200, fols. 462-63. Van Beek to Board of X, March 8, 1703; 201, fols. 2 ff. Gerard Luls to Board of X, April 6, 1703.
60. Don Gaspar de Andrade, the *asentista* of the Portuguese Company in Cartagena, leaving that port, was caught by Pierre Sirve, a Dutch privateer, and with 50,000 *pesos* cash brought to Curaçao. Van Beek sent him, the money, and his papers to Amsterdam. NWIC 200, fols. 389-91.
61. NWIC 201, fols. 63-64. Van Beek to Board of X, July 4, 1703.
62. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 5 (6), Dec. 2, 1702. CTP to Earl of Nottingham.
63. *Ibid.*
64. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 572 (950), Col. Quarry to CTP, July 25, 1703.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 646 (1033), Col. Quarry to CTP, August 14, 1703.
66. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 779 (1208), CTP to Earl of Nottingham, Aug. 29, 1703.
67. *Ibid.*
68. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 711 (1119), Lt. Gov. Handasyde to CTP, Oct. 15, 1703.
69. NWIC 201, fols. 63-64. Van Beek to Board of X, July 4, 1703.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Ch. Wilson, *The Dutch Republic*, New York, World Univ. Library, 1968, p. 195.
72. NWIC 201, fols. 83-85. Letter of May 25, 1703.
73. *Ibid.*, fol. 163. Van Beek to Board of X, Sept. 11, 1703.



74. Scelle II, pp. 285-293.
75. NWIC 201, fol. 246, Van Beek to Board of X, March 1, 1704. See also CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 839 (1326), Lt. Gov. Handasyde to Earl of Nottingham, Nov. 27, 1703.
76. NWIC 201, fol. 295.
77. NWIC 201, fol. 247. Van Beek to Board of X, March 1, 1704.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*
80. NWIC 201, fols. 258-59. Letter of Oct. 26, 1703.
81. NWIC 201, fols. 284 ff. Beck to the Board of X, Aug. 21, 1704.
82. *Ibid.* Van Tongerlo was a former captain of the WIC.
83. NWIC 201, fols. 306-307. Van Beek to Gov. of Jamaica, Aug. 8, 1704, and CSP XXVIII, 1712-14, p. vii.
84. NWIC 201, fols. 306-307. Van Beek to Board of X, Aug. 8, 1704.
85. NWIC 1, fols. 241-42. Session of the Board of X of March 28, 1705.
86. NWIC 201, fols. 373-400. Beck to Board of X, April 11, 1705.
87. See note 70.
88. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 779 (1208), Oct. 29, 1703.
89. CSP XXI, 1702-1703, p. 272 (472). Circular letter from the Earl of Nottingham to the Governors of Her Majesty's Plantations, March 18, 1703.
90. CSP XXII, 1704-1705, p. 49 (116). W. Popple to Richard Warr, Febr. 18, 1704.
91. *Ibid.*
92. *Ibid.*
93. CSP XXII, 1704-1705, p. 113 (285). May 2, 1704.
94. He was shortly before promoted to governor. See Alan G. Burns, *History of British West Indies*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 2nd ed. 1965, pp. 430-32, and Clinton V. Black, *The Story of Jamaica*, London, Collins, 1968, pp. 71 and 74.
95. CSP XXII, 1704-1705, p. 251 (566), Gov. Handasyde to CTP, Sept. 17, 1704.



96. CSP XXII, 1704-1705, p. 251 (566). Gov. Handasyde to CTP, Sept. 17, 1704.
96. NWIC 202, fols. 110-11. Res. of the *Raad*, Aug. 11, 1705. This resolution was approved by the X in its session of April 17, 1706. See NWIC 1, 1706, fol. 271.
97. NWIC 1, fol. 269. Session of Board of X, April 17, 1706. See also J.H.J. Hamelberg, *De Nederlanders op de West-Indische eilanden*, Amsterdam, I, 1901, p. 113.
98. NWIC 1, fol. 304. Session of Board of X, July 14, 1706.
99. NWIC 202, fol. 216. Beck to Board of X, Dec. 9, 1707.
100. NWIC 1, fol. 323. Session of the Board of X, July 21, 1706.
101. NWIC 201, fol. 240. Session of the Board of X, Dec. 1, 1707.
102. Complaints on this low quality were already earlier voiced. See NWIC 1, fol. 396. Session of Board of X, Nov. 21, 1707; and 202, fols. 391-92. Beck to Board of X, May 26, 1708.
103. CSP XXV, 1710-11, pp. 326-28 (567). Letter of Dec. 26, 1710. See also p. 17 (48-52), Jan. 9, 1710, and pp. 91-98 (228), Gov. Parks of Antigua to CTP, May 11, 1710.
104. CSP XXIV, 1708-1709, p. 532 (872) CTP to Gov. Handasyde, Nov. 25, 1709.
105. CSP XXIV, 1708-1709, p. 95 (134), Earl of Sunderland to CTP, Sept. 14, 1708.
106. The French, at that time, seemed to have three African companies: the Company of Guinea, of Senegal, and of St. Domingue. See Palacios, *La Trata de Negros por Cartagena de Indias*, p. 128. See also NWIC 1, fol. 417. Session of the Board of X, Nov. 30, 1707.
107. NWIC 202, fol. 431. Luls to Board of X, May 25, 1708.
108. NWIC 202, fols. 372-73. Beck to Board of X, May 26, 1708.
109. *Ibid.*
110. *Ibid.* Sessions of the *Raad* of March 13 and 19, 1708.
111. Gov. Beck trespassed Company's regulation by paying the crews of the two slavers the *Elmina* and the *Adrichem* some wages - resp. Ps. 264 and 365 to buy new clothes to replace their raghs. He was severely reprimanded by the Board. NWIC 202, fol. 461. Van Collen to Board of X, Jan. 31, 1709.



112. NWIC 3, fol. 95. See on the Van Collen family Johan E. Elias, *Geschiedenis van het Amsterdamsche Regentenpatriciaat*, 's-Gravenhage, 1923.
113. NWIC 2, fol. 48. Session of Board of X, Nov. 15, 1708; 202, fols. 577-78. Van Collen to Board of X, June 8, 1709.
114. NWIC 202, fols. 372 ff. Beck to Board of X, May 26, 1708.
115. NWIC 2, fol. 197. Session of Board of X, Sept. 19, 1710.
116. NWIC 2, fol. 201. Session of Board of X, Sept. 22, 1710.
117. NWIC 202, fol. 580. Van Collen to Board of X, June 8, 1709.
118. NWIC 202, fol. 583. Res. of *Raad*, June 1 and 2, 1709. Some gold was also confiscated together with another nine *Piezas de India* and Ps. 1884 in cash.
119. NWIC 202, fols. 590-99, 601-602.
120. NWIC 203, fols. 1-2. Beck to Board of X, July 13, 1709.
121. NWIC 203, fols. 124-25. Declaration of Van Collen, July 5, 1709.
122. NWIC 203, fols. 186-88. Request of July 17, 1709.
123. NWIC 203, fol. 206. Request of July 24, 1709.
124. NWIC 203, fol. 206-207.
125. NWIC 203, fols. 283 and 211-14.
126. NWIC 203, fol. 290 and 370. Beck to Board of X, Jan. 1710. Fol. 310, Res. of the *Raad*, Sept. 4, 1709.
127. NWIC 203, fol. 290 and fols. 374-75. Session of *Raad*, Oct. 15, 1709.
128. NWIC 203, fol. 513. Minutes of the *Raad*. Placards were issued June 11, July 9, and July 29, 1710.
129. NWIC 203, fol. 375.
130. NWIC 203, fol. 595. Postma, pp. 234 and 237.
131. NWIC 203, fols. 627-28.
132. NWIC 204, fols. 1-36. Van Collen to Board of X, March, 1711.
133. NWIC 204, fols. 52-53, 56-64 and 150-51. Van Collen to Board of X, March 17, 1711.



134. NWIC 204, fols. 340-43. Van Collen to Board of X, June 30, 1711; and fol. 465. Van Collen to Board of X, April 12, 1712. The one slaver that arrived was the *Honaart* (called by Postma *Homert*).

135. NWIC 204, fols. 467-69. Van Collen to the Board of X, April 12, 1712. Van Collen was officially inaugurated as governor, being appointed by the Board in its session of Dec. 5, 1711. The Venezuelan governor was José L. de Cañas y Merino, born in Africa of Spanish parents and an active persecutor of the contraband trade. See Luis A. Sucre, *Gobernadores y capitanes generales de Venezuela*, Caracas, 1964, pp. 207-13. Documents in NWIC 204 are missing from June 30, 1711 to April 12, 1712. Postma's study indicates that no slavers with destination Curaçao left Africa during this period.

136. NWIC 205, fol. 20. Van Collen to Board of X, May 17, 1713. Another slaver which arrived in this year, the *Clara* changed its destination Surinam for Curaçao after hearing that the French under Cassard were operating in the Guianas area. See fol. 379. Van Collen to Board of X, May 18, 1713. *Piezas de India* were sold in public auction for a little over Ps. 108.

137. This was the *Adrichem*. See NWIC 205, fols. 417-26. Van Collen to Board of X, Febr. 10, 1714.

138. NWIC 205, fols. 585 ff. Van Collen to Board of X, Jan. 18, 1715.

139. NWIC 205, fols. 626-31. De Bij to Board of X, June 12, 1714; fols. 638-40. De Bij to Board of X, Nov. 27, 1714.

140. NWIC 206, fols. 73-76. De Bij to Board of X, July 4, 1715.

141. NWIC 206, fols. 101-102. De Bij to Board of X, Aug. 3, 1715.

142. NWIC 1, fol. 97.

143. NWIC 3, fols. 86-93.

144. NWIC 3, fols. 233-238. Session Nov. 3, 1713.

145. The Curaçao slave trade did not end as abruptly as Postma's study indicates. For 1716 Postma gives only one slaver with destination Curaçao, the *Gelderland*. In reality four slavers dropped anchor in Willemstad in the course of that year: the *Nieuwe Post* with 467 blacks out of 513; the *Fida* with 241 blacks out of 257; *Vlissings Welvaren* with 194 slaves (no deaths!); and the *Gelderland* (mentioned by Postma p. 236) with 141 blacks out of 146. In 1717, only one slaver, the *Emmenes*, arrived with 449 blacks. Our research ended there. If we must believe Postma, the ten years, from 1716 to 1725, saw only three slavers in Willemstad.



## REFERENCES

The materiel for this article was mainly found in ARA (Algemeen Rijksarchief), The Hague in the following items:

Nieuwe West Indische Compagnie (New West India Company, NWIC), no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and no. 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206. The first books contain the minutes of the sessions of the Board of X during the years 1700 through 1716, the second collection of books contain the letters and other information sent by the governors and other officials of the WIC in Curaçao to the Board of X over the same period.

<i>Annaboa</i>	NWIC 200, fol. 70.
<i>Vergulde Vrijheyd</i>	fol. 99, 113, 369.
<i>Wapen van Holland</i>	fol. 155-56, 168-71, 188.
<i>Eva Maria</i>	fol. 157, 187, 206-208.
<i>Quinira (or Jufvrouw Quinira)</i>	fol. 222, 231, 244-45.
<i>Margarethe Catharina</i>	fol. 262-69, 275, 370.
<i>Vergulde Son (or Son)</i>	fol. 269, 287, 370.
<i>Rachel</i>	fol. 269, 297, 372.
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	NWIC 201, fol. 176-77.
<i>Vrientschap</i>	fol. 328, 345.
<i>Elmina</i>	fol. 473.
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	fol. 480-83.
<i>Hollandia</i>	NWIC 202, fol. 41.
<i>Vergulde Son (or Son)</i>	fol. 146-49.
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	fol. 141, 146.
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	fol. 174.
<i>Wakende Craan</i>	fol. 175.
<i>Coninck van Portugal</i>	fol. 198, 224, 342-45.
<i>Vergulde Son (or Son)</i>	fol. 284, 349.
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	fol. 377, 391.
<i>Elmina</i>	fol. 460, 478-87, 554.
<i>Adrichem</i>	fol. 461, 494, 554.
<i>Quinira (or Jufvrouw Quinira)</i>	fol. 573-74, 627-28.
<i>Axim</i>	fol. 545.
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	fol. 553.
<i>Adrichem</i>	NWIC 205, fol. 438.
<i>St. Clara (or Clara)</i>	fol. 338.
<i>St. Marcus</i>	fol. 425.
<i>Coninginne Hester</i>	fol. 638-40, 643.
<i>Adrichem</i>	NWIC 206, fol. 73-74, 78-79.
<i>Emmenes</i>	fol. 74, 92-96.
<i>Sonnesteijn</i>	fol. 103-104.
<i>Engelenburgh</i>	fol. 114, 146.
<i>Nieuwe Post</i>	fol. 175-76.
<i>Fida</i>	fol. 178-80.
<i>Vlissings Welvaren</i>	fol. 218.
<i>Gelderland</i>	fol. 223-24, 226.



*The Curaçao slave trade during the War of the Spanish Succession*

<i>Ship</i>	Port of departure	Date of departure	Destination	Date of arrival	Number of blacks		P = Postma
					embarked	disembarked	
				?	488	362	P. 236
<i>Graaf van Laarwijk</i>	Fida	April 1700	Cartagena	Jan. 1701	566	406 <sup>1)</sup>	P. 236
<i>Croonvogel</i>	Fida	May 1700	Cartagena	Sept. 28, 1700	110	68	P. 234
<i>Annaboa</i>	Elmina	June 1700	Curaçao	Oct. 25, 1700	565	?	P. 234
<i>Beschermer</i>	Fida	Aug. 1700	Cartagena	March 4, 1701 <sup>2)</sup>	762	647	not in P.
<i>West Indisch Huis</i>	?	?	Cartagena	March 9, 1701	694	669	not in P.
<i>Vergulde Vrijheyd</i>	Loango/Boary	?	Curaçao	?	505	433 <sup>3)</sup>	not in P.
<i>Faam</i>	Elmina	?	Cartagena	June 25, 1701	664	459	not in P.
<i>Wapen van Holland</i>	Ardra	Nov. 1700	Curaçao	June ? 1701	136	124 <sup>4)</sup>	P. 236
<i>Jager</i>	?	Jan. 1701	Curaçao	July 28, 1701	644	588	not in P.
<i>Eva Maria</i>	Loango/Boary	?	Curaçao	Aug. 11, 1701	499	430	not in P.
<i>Quinira</i>	Ardra	?	Curaçao	Nov. 20, 1701	443	386	not in P.
<i>Margaretha Catharina</i>	Loango/Boary	?	Curaçao	Dec. 11, 1701	369	315	not in P.
<i>Vergulde Son</i>	Ardra	?	Curaçao	Jan. 24, 1703	419	331	P. 237
<i>Rachel</i>	Fida	June 1703	Curaçao	March 4, 1703	542	502	not in P.
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	Angola	?	Curaçao	Aug. 6, 1704	393	314	P. 238
<i>Vrientschap</i>	Elmina/Fida	Febr. 1704	Curaçao	Dec. 2, 1704	171	158	P. 235
<i>Elmina</i>	Elmina/Moure	Oct. 1704	Curaçao	Jan. 5, 1705	653	615	not in P.
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	Loango/Molemba	?	Curaçao	May 13, 1705	712	557	not in P.
<i>Hollandia</i>	Loango/Molemba	?	Curaçao	Oct. 12, 1705	694	559	not in P.
<i>Son</i>	Loango/Molemba	?	Curaçao				



<i>Ship</i>	Port of departure	Date of departure	Destination	Date of arrival	Number of blacks embarked	Number of blacks disembarked	P = Pos
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	Fida	Aug. 1705		Nov. 14, 1705	473	399	P.
<i>Quinira</i>	Accra	March 1706	Curaçao	May 25, 1706 <sup>4)</sup>	547	394	P.
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	Loango/Molemba	April 1706	Curaçao	Oct. 25, 1706	705		
<i>Moscow</i>	Fida	Oct. 1706	Curaçao	Oct. 25, 1706	705	626	P.
<i>Wakende Craan</i>	Elmina	Oct. 1706	Curaçao	diverted to Essequibo <sup>4)</sup>	571		P.
<i>Catharina Christina</i>	Accra	Dec. 1706	Curaçao	Nov. 30, 1706	190	177	P.
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	?	April 1707	Curaçao	March 11, 1707 <sup>4)</sup>	540	507	P.
<i>Coninck van Portugal</i>	Ardra/Fida	July 1707	Curaçao	never arrived	559		P.
<i>Son (or Vergulde Son)</i>	Fida	Sept. 1707	Curaçao	Oct. 31, 1707	536	428	P.
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	Elmina	Nov. 1707	Curaçao	Dec. 30, 1707	558	417	P.
<i>Elmina</i>	Elmina	?	Curaçao	Febr. 15, 1708	425	171	P.
<i>St. Jago</i>	Fida	July 1708	Curaçao	Nov. 18, 1708	196	182	not in
<i>Adrichem</i>	Fida	?	Curaçao	never arrived	200		P.
<i>Quinira</i>	Fida	Febr. 1709	Curaçao	Nov. 27, 1708	612	462	not in
<i>Amsterdam</i>	Fida	Jan. 1710	Curaçao	May 12, 1709	530	464	P.
<i>Africa</i> <sup>5)</sup>	Fida	May 1710	Curaçao	never arrived	483		P.
<i>Axim</i>	Elmina	?	Curaçao	never arrived	195		P.
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	Fida	Oct. 1710	Curaçao	Oct. 10, 1710	139	83	not in
<i>Moscow</i> <sup>6)</sup>	Aja	Oct. 1710	Curaçao	Dec. 7, 1710	490	458	P.
<i>Axim</i> <sup>7)</sup>	?	June 1711	Curaçao	never arrived	572		P.
<i>Honaert</i> <sup>8)</sup>	Fida	June 1711	Curaçao	never arrived	?		P.
<i>Acredam</i> <sup>9)</sup>	Fida	June 1712	Curaçao	Dec. 7, 1711	?	584	P.
				diverted to Surinam	570		P.



Date of arrival	Number of blacks embarked	Number of blacks disembarked	P = Postma	Ship	Port of departure	Date of departure	Destination
April 30, 1712	611	570	not in P.	<i>Adrichem</i>	Fida	?	Curaçao
Nov. 16, 1712	584	452	P. 235	<i>St. Clara</i> (or <i>Clara</i> )	Fida	Sept. 1712	Curaçao
Jan. 12, 1714	585	556	P. 237	<i>St. Marcus</i>	Fida	Nov. 1713	Curaçao
diverted to Surinam <sup>9)</sup>	596		P. 234	<i>Acredam</i>	Fida	March 1714	Curaçao
Sept. 17, 1714	620 <sup>11)</sup>	466	P. 236	<i>Coninginne Hester</i>	Fida	April 1714	Curaçao
diverted to Surinam <sup>4)</sup>	541		P. 236	<i>Guntersteyn</i>	Fida	April 1714	Curaçao
June 26, 1715	717	373	not in P.	<i>Adrichem</i>	Loango/Boary	?	Curaçao
July 9, 1715	563	459	P. 235	<i>Emmenes</i>	Fida	March 1715	Curaçao
Sept. 2, 1715	102	66	not in P.	<i>Sonnesteyn</i>	Elmina	?	Curaçao
Dec. 10, 1715	153	136	P. 235	<i>Engelenburgh</i>	Elmina	Oct. 1715	Curaçao
Febr. 9, 1716	559	513	not in P.	<i>Nieuwe Post</i>	Angola	?	Curaçao
Febr. 9, 1716	257	241	P. 236	<i>Fida</i>	Elmina	Dec. 1715	Curaçao
March 13, 1716	194	194	not in P.	<i>Vlissings Welvaren</i>	Loango	?	Curaçao
June 7, 1716	146	141	P. 236	<i>Gelderland</i>	Elmina	April 1716	Curaçao



- 1) Postma's date of the *Groonvogel*'s departure must be wrong. If this ship (also spelled *Kroonvogel*) left the West African coast in May, 1700, and passed Curaçao in January, 1701, the crossing of the Atlantic would have required an incredible eight months. Postma gives an *armazoen* of 500 blacks; when it passed Curaçao it carried 495 (NWIC 200, fol. 67). It disembarked in Cartagena only 406 (see Palacios, p. 101).
- 2) The *West Indisch Huis* passed Curaçao March 4, 1701, on its way to Cartagena.
- 3) The *Faam* passed Curaçao March 28, 1701, with 436 blacks out of an *armazoen* of 505.
- 4) Information given by Postma in private correspondence.
- 5) The *Africa* probably never crossed the Atlantic. Information given by Postma in private correspondence.
- 6) The *Moscow* is an error of Postma, p. 237. Information given by Postma in private correspondence.
- 7) The *Axim*, P. p. 234 idem.
- 8) The *Honaert* (or *Honaart*) arrived Dec. 7, 1711 and disembarked 584 blacks. Information given by Postma in private correspondence.
- 9) The *Acredam* was diverted to Surinam. Idem.
- 10) The destination of the *St. Clara* was originally Surinam. Because of French privateering under Cassard it was diverted to Curaçao.
- 11) Postma, p. 236 gives an *armazoen* of 617 ½.

In the period from 1700 through 1716 56 Dutch slavers crossed the Atlantic with destination Cartagena or Curaçao. Of these 56 slavers 20 are not mentioned by Postma. Five had Cartagena as their destination. Postma mentions only three. Of the 51 with destination Curaçao private correspondence with Postma revealed that four were diverted to the Guianas. Of the 47 slavers left six never dropped anchor in Willemstad. Of the remaining 41 Postma mentions only 23.

However in private correspondence with Postma the latter revealed that he has completed much additional research (of which some is included in this article as mentioned above). Consequently his (xeroxed) dissertation will be completely revised and hopefully soon published.



*Sales of Slaves in Curaçao 1700-1716*

<i>Number</i>		<i>Deliverable slaves</i>			<i>Mancquerons</i>	<i>Public auctions</i>	
<i>Ship</i>	<i>of slaves</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Piezas</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>and sick slaves</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>Annaboa</i>	68	30	24 5/6	Ps. 2,483.2.4	38	38	Ps. 2,245
<i>Vergulde Vrijhey</i>	669	556	482	Ps. 46,754	113	113	Ps. 7,584.5.2
<i>Wapen van Holland</i>	459	257	239 1/3	Ps. 23,233.5.4	202	197	Ps. 11,936.2.4
<i>Eva Maria</i>	588	441	378 5/6	Ps. 37,883.4	147	133	Ps. 7,563.4
<i>Quinira</i>	430	227	214 1/3	Ps. 21,433	203	185	Ps. 7,914.2.4
						45	Ps. 2,284
<i>Jager</i>	124	?	?	?	?		
<i>Margaretha Catharina</i>	386	302	263 1/3	Ps. 26,333.4	84	83	Ps. 3,526.1.2
<i>Vergulde Son</i>	315	237	231 5/6	Ps. 23,783.4	78	77	Ps. 3,765
<i>Rachel</i>	331	220	213 1/6	Ps. 21,316.8	111	125	Ps. 5,511
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	502	354	305 5/6	Ps. 30,583.4	148	138	Ps. 7,354.3
<i>Vrientschap</i>	314	228	214 5/6	Ps. 21,483.4	86	79	Ps. 5,582.4
<i>Elmina</i>	158	102	101	Ps. 10,100	56	56	Ps. 5,250.4
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	615	468	412 1/6	Ps. 41,216.8	167	147	Ps. 9,873
<i>Hollandia</i>	557	333	297 5/6	Ps. 29,783.4	224	224	Ps. 12,681.4
<i>Son (or Vergulde Son)</i>	559	431	380 5/6		128	128	Ps. 7,560
			301 a	Ps. 100			
			79 a	Ps. 108			
<i>Duynenburgh</i>	399	347	331 1/6	Ps. 30,583.4	52	52	Ps. 4,212.4
<i>Quinira</i>	394	?	?	?	?		
<i>Beurs van Amsterdam</i>	626	?	475 1/3	Ps. 51.136	?	23	Ps. 1.909
<i>Wakende Craan</i>	177	120	120	Ps. 12.960	57	?	
<i>Catharina Christina</i>	507	?	?	?	?		
<i>Coninck van Portugal</i>	428	327	327	Ps. 35.316	101	101	Ps. 7.020.4



Ship	Number of slaves	Deliverable slaves			Mancquerons and sick slaves	Public auctions	
		Number	Piezas	Amount		Number	Amount
<i>Son (or Vergulde Son)</i>	417		288	Ps. 31,104	129	130	Ps. 7,294.4
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	171	109	99 1/2	Ps. 10,746	62	66	Ps. 3,454
<i>Elmina</i>	182	136	128 1/2	Ps. 13,878	46	46	Ps. 2,688
<i>Adrichem</i>	462	355	347 2/3	Ps. 37,548	107	107	Ps. 6,912.4
<i>Quinira</i>	464	362	357 1/2	Ps. 38,566	102	102	Ps. 6,049
						29	Ps. 2,438*
<i>Axim</i>	83	46	45 1/5	Ps. 4,896	37	37	Ps. 2,211
<i>Carolus Secundus</i>	458	335	329 2/3	Ps. 35,604	123	123	Ps. 8,271
<i>Honaart</i>	584	?	?	?	?		
<i>Adrichem</i>	570	476	458	Ps. 49,464	94	74	Ps. 4,977.4
<i>St. Clara (or Clara)</i>	452	298	284 1/3	Ps. 30,672	154	154	Ps. 10,731.6
<i>St. Marcus</i>	556	471	440	Ps. 47,520	85	62	Ps. 4,093
<i>Coninginne Hester</i>	466	289	244 2/5	Ps. 26,424	177	127	Ps. 7,961
<i>Adrichem</i>	373	141	118	Ps. 12,744	232	232	Ps. 7,344.7
<i>Emmenes</i>	459	270	248	Ps. 26,784	189	189	Ps. 6,804.2
<i>Sonnesteyn</i>	66	26	23	Ps. 2,484	40	54	Ps. 5,228
						35	Ps. 702.2
<i>Engelenburgh</i>	136	99	94 1/6	Ps. 10,170	37	37	Ps. 1,582
<i>Nieuwe Post</i>	513	344	281 2/3	Ps. 30,420	169	162	Ps. 7,135.4
<i>Fida</i>	241	129	123 1/3	Ps. 13,320	112	112	Ps. 5,352.4
<i>Vlissings Welvaren</i>	194	142	126	Ps. 13,644	52	55	Ps. 2,775.4
<i>Gelderland</i>	141	80	74	Ps. 7,992	61	61	Ps. 3,639



## LIFE TABLE FOR SURINAME 1964 - 1970

Between 1923 and 1962, the mortality rate of Surinam fell sharply from 24.4 to 8.8 per 1000 inhabitants. This downward trend continued after 1962, although its rate of decline was less pronounced than in the pre-1962 period: the deathrate decreased from 8.8 per 1000 in 1962 to 6.6 in 1973 (Lamur 1973: 96-98; 1974: 551). The small decline during the 1960s is related to the fact that as mortality drops, an optimum (saturation point) is reached. As a result, the rate of the continuing decline diminishes.

Table 1 indicates that the mortality decline is observable not only for Surinam.

TABLE 1

## Death Rates for Guyana, Surinam and Trinidad

<i>year</i>	<i>Guyana</i>	<i>Surinam</i>	<i>Trinidad</i>
1923	28.5	24.4	20.8
1930	23.2	16.0	18.9
1940	18.6	14.4	15.7
1950	14.6	11.6	12.1
1960	9.5	8.4	7.9
1970	6.8	7.4	6.7
1971	—	7.4	6.8
1972	—	6.8	—
1973	—	6.6	—

Countries whose socio-economic structure is roughly similar to that of Surinam, that is, Guyana and Trinidad, evince a similar declining trend in their death rates. This is shown by the figures published in the *Demographic Yearbook*. Guyana's mortality decreased from 28.5 per 1000 in 1923 to 6.8 per 1000 in 1970. The figures for Trinidad were 20.8 and 6.8 (in 1971). The substantial decrease in Surinam's death rate is closely connected with the de-



clining importance of contagious and parasitic diseases as mortality causes and this resulted from measures taken to improve public health just before and after the Second World War (Lamur 1973: 100-109).

The relatively low mortality level of Surinam is demonstrated not only in the low death rates, but can also be derived from other measurements such as mortality probability and life expectancy. The purpose of this article is to discuss the changes in these indices between 1964 and 1970. The analysis is based on data collected in 1971 in Surinam.

In discussing the probability of dying and the life expectancy of Surinam's population, migration has partly been ignored because of the lack of information that would permit a complete investigation of the role of this factor. However, this does not mean that in general this variable may be omitted in studies on life tables. And since migration to Holland was an important component of the population growth of Surinam in the post-1962 period, some remarks on this demographic variable are needed to gain an insight into the mortality level. Insofar as migration is concerned in this article the discussion will be confined to two factors, namely the age structure of the population and the numerical representation of the ethnic groups.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the 50,000 Surinamers — Maroons and Amerindians — living in tribes are excluded from the investigation, since the data for these groups have not been broken down into categories and, in the available material, information on age, sex and ethnic group is often omitted.

### *Probability of dying*

The mortality probability and the life expectancy are computed on the basis of 'a hypothetical cohort, which is taken through all the ages of life and, at each of the various ages, is subjected to the mortality conditions observed for real cohorts in the year (or group of years) studied' (Pressat 1972: 113). For Surinam the construction of the life table is derived from a cohort of 100,000 newborn.

The results of the computations show that the mortality probabilities for men exceeded those for women. But for both sexes the rates remained virtually unchanged between 1964 and 1970.



TABLE 2

Life Table for Surinam, 1964 and 1970, and for Trinidad &amp; Tobago, 1970 (Selected Age Group).

Age  X	Male				Female			
	Probability of dying within age interval	Survivors to age X	Deaths within age interval	Life expectancy at age X	Probability of dying within age interval	Survivors to age X	Deaths within age interval	Life expectancy at age X
	q <sub>x</sub>	l <sub>x</sub>	d <sub>x</sub>	e <sub>x</sub>	q <sub>x</sub>	l <sub>x</sub>	d <sub>x</sub>	e <sub>x</sub>
<i>Suriname 1964</i>								
0-1	0.04390	100000	4390	61.0	0.04069	100000	4069	65.0
15-19	0.00455	92950	422	49.0	0.00460	93777	432	55.0
30-34	0.01910	90601	1730	35.0	0.01575	91326	1438	38.0
45-49	0.04785	84445	4040	22.0	0.03170	86493	2741	25.0
60-64	0.16080	69293	11142	10.0	0.11980	72362	8668	14.0
<i>Suriname 1970</i>								
0-1	0.03848	100000	3848	61.0	0.03334	100000	3334	65.0
15-19	0.00745	93665	697	48.0	0.00475	94631	449	52.0
30-34	0.01930	90438	1745	34.0	0.01310	92906	1217	36.0
45-49	0.04285	84323	3613	22.0	0.04125	88471	3649	24.0
60-64	0.16460	67398	11093	10.0	0.13000	73746	9586	13.0
<i>Trinidad &amp; Tobago 1970</i>								
0-1	0.03764	100000	—	64.0	0.03115	100000	—	69.0
15-19	0.00454	94753	—	52.0	0.00414	95742	—	56.0
40-34	0.01351	94544	—	39.0	0.01015	94129	—	42.0
45-49	0.03724	88136	—	25.0	0.02669	90195	—	28.0
60-64	0.12953	72840	—	14.0	0.10852	78381	—	16.0



Table 2 also indicates that the risks of mortality for infants decreased during the period under review. For boys the rate declined from 43.9 to 38.4 per 1000 live births, while the equivalent figures for girls were 40.6 and 33.3. This favorable (declining) effect for infants was partly counterbalanced by a slight increase of the risks for some of the higher age categories, namely the brackets 15-19, 60-64 for men, and 45-49, 60-64 for women. In the case of the high age groups, however, the rise in the mortality rates is apparently due to the small numbers per category.

### *Life expectancy*

The mean length of life at age X is the number of years lived after attaining that age. Table 3 indicates that life expectancy at birth was higher for women than for men. In the period under review the mean yearly discrepancy was roughly 4 points for Surinam as a whole. For the Hindustani, the Creoles and the Javanese the differences amounted to 3, 4, 5 points respectively. The life expectancy at birth remained virtually unchanged between 1964 and 1970, holding at the level of 61.0 years for males, and 65.0 for females. With the possible exception of the Javanese, this conclusion applies more or less also to the ethnic groups. This trend is consistent with the fact referred to earlier that the crude death rate did not change either (Table 1). However, this particular case of similarity between the measurements of mortality, life expectancy and crude death rate, does not necessarily hold for other periods of Surinam's demographic history.

As regards the various age groups, it is worth noting that the mean length of life for the productive age group showed a slight decline. This tends to indicate that — other things remaining equal — the average number of economic-active years available per member of the productive age category did not change dramatically between 1964 and 1970. In other words, the mean length of time for which the group might continue as members of the labour force remained unchanged.

Trinidad, which has a socio-economic structure somewhat similar to that of Surinam has a life expectancy at birth that is 3 points higher on average than Surinam's. For the year 1970 the



figures were 64.0 years for men and 68.0 for women (Central Stat. Off. 1973 : 34-35; Popul. Index 1975 : 337). The lower life expectancy at birth for Surinam as a whole is partly due to the fact the ethnic groups with a low life expectancy — Hindustani and Javanese — form a greater proportion of Surinam's total population than is the case in Trinidad and Tobago (see Table 4).

Apparently, the difference between Surinam and Trinidad concerning the numerical representation of the ethnic groups has

TABLE 3

## Life expectancy in Surinam at Birth, 1964-1970

Year	<i>Creole</i>		<i>Hindustani</i>		<i>Javanese</i>		<i>Surinam</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
1964	65.0	68.0	60.0	63.0	60.0	62.0	61.0	65.0
1965	64.0	69.0	58.0	63.0	62.0	66.0	62.0	64.0
1966	66.0	70.0	61.0	63.0	63.0	64.0	63.0	67.0
1967	65.0	71.0	60.0	62.0	60.0	64.0	61.0	66.0
1968	65.0	71.0	60.0	62.0	64.0	67.0	62.0	67.0
1969	65.0	70.0	60.0	63.0	61.0	67.0	61.0	67.0
1970	66.0	69.0	60.0	63.0	61.0	65.0	61.0	65.0

Surinam includes small ethnic groups, but excludes tribal groups.  
Values are rounded off: over 0.5 becomes 1.0.

TABLE 4

## Population by Ethnic Group in Surinam and Trinidad, 1960

<i>Surinam</i>					
(includes small ethnic groups, but excludes tribal groups)					
<i>Creole</i>		<i>Hindustani / Javanese</i>		<i>Surinam</i>	
number	%	number	%	number	%
102,649	40.0	142,049	55.3	256,526	100.0
<i>Trinidad</i>					
(includes small ethnic groups. Source: Harewood 1975)					
<i>Creole</i>		<i>Indian (= Hindustani)</i>		<i>Trinidad</i>	
number	%	number	%	number	%
493,337	59.6	301,946	36.5	827,957	100.0



increased during the 1960s. This growing discrepancy is mainly caused by the ethnic-selective emigration of Surinamers to Holland. 'Creole overrepresentation is also visible in the emigration percentages: during this period the average yearly numbers were 17.9 per 1000 population for the Creoles, 4.8 per 1000 for the Hindustani, and 1.6 for the Javanese. Note, however, that the differences between the ethnic-specific emigration rates are steadily declining.' (Lamur 1973: 131-132).

Apart from the numerical positions of ethnic groups, the age-selective character of emigration may also influence the difference in life expectancy between Surinam and Trinidad. However, the migration figures for the two countries did not differ dramatically during the period under review. As regards Surinam an average of more than 70% of the net migrants were of working age (15-64 years), while for Trinidad the equivalent rate was 80% (Harewood 1975: 22-23). So it is not likely that this factor can explain the difference between the two countries.

A third possible cause of the mortality differentials between the two countries is the growing urbanization of Maroons and Amerindians. It has been pointed out earlier in this article that tribal groups were omitted. However, this proved to be impossible for members of these groups who had already settled in the capital of Surinam when the research for this paper began in 1971. Since these groups have a relatively low mean length of life, their inclusion in the sample has contributed to Surinam's low life expectancy as compared with Trinidad, where both Maroons and Amerindians are absent. The 1964 General Population Census put the number of Maroons and Amerindians in Surinam at 32,000, while the 1971 census counts 50,000 tribal people. Of this total at least 8000 members had settled in Paramaribo and surroundings.

The life table 1964-1970 in this article represents only selected age groups. The complete table will be used together with the fertility table for the same period (Lamur & Lamur in prep.) to carry out demographic projections, both for the total population and the labour force.

The authors are grateful to Rod Aya for his assistance in preparing the English version of this article.

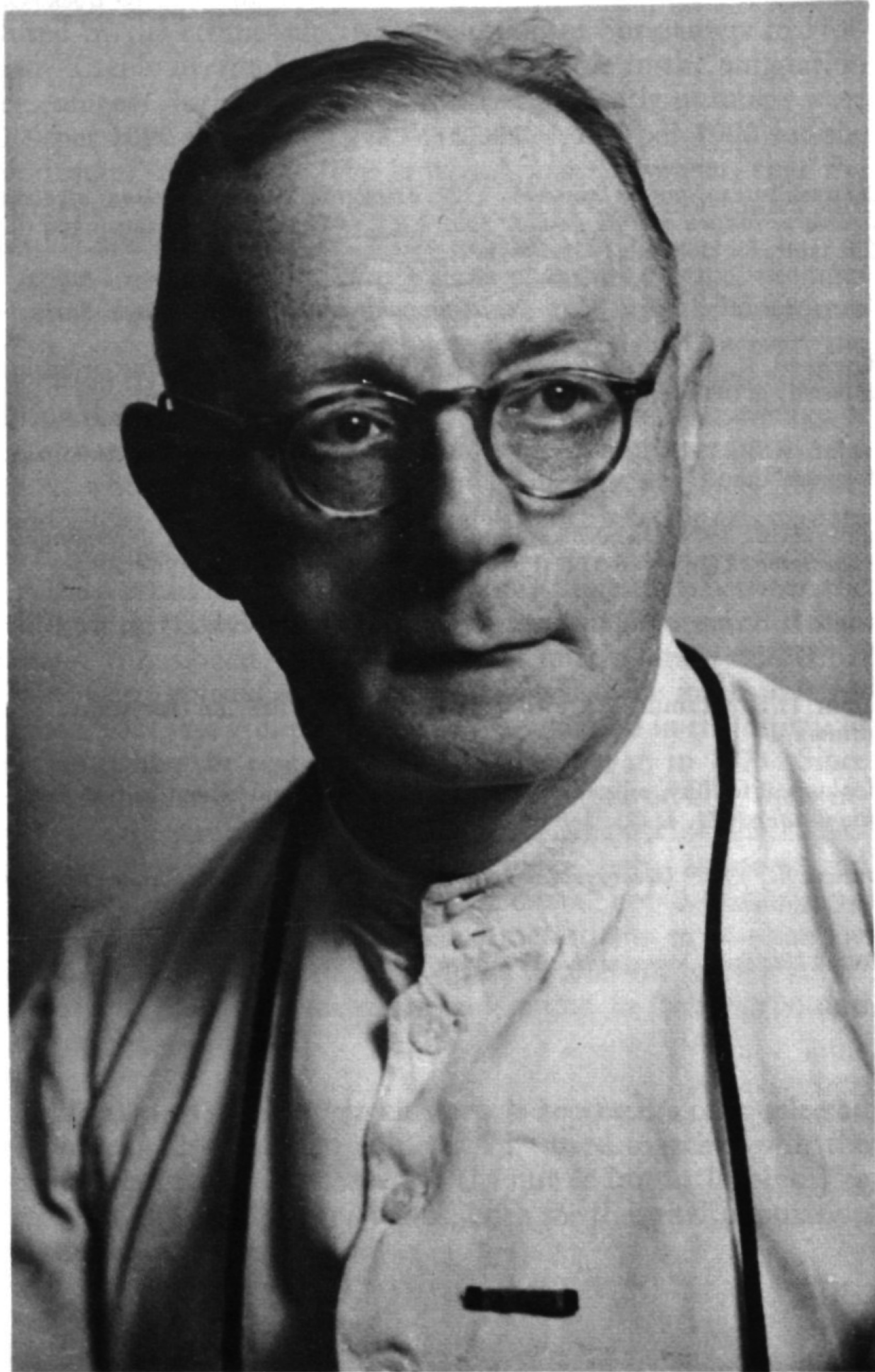


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Address of authors: Universiteit van Amsterdam,  
Antrop.-Sociol. Centrum, Afd. Culturele Antropologie,





*Fr. M. Realino Janssen.*



# IN MEMORIAM FRATER M. REALINO

Op 22 februari 1977 overleed op 87-jarige leeftijd in het Fraterhuis Johannes Zwijsen te Tilburg Frater M. Realino-Janssen. Hij was een zo groot en trouw vriend van hen die zich met het wetenschappelijk onderzoek van de Nederlandse Antillen bezig hielden, en heeft daarbij op Curaçao zo veel gedaan om kennis en liefde voor eigen land te bevorderen, dat het niet onjuist lijkt in de N.W.I.G. voor zijn leven en werken enige aandacht te vragen.

Frederikus Johannes Antonius Janssen werd op 18 november 1889 te Zwolle geboren. Hij was de oudste zoon van Jacobus Theodorus Janssen (1859-1951) die van zijn 14de tot zijn 28ste jaar als matroos-zeilmaker vele zeeën bevoer en daarbij ook Curaçao leerde kennen.

Toen Frits op zesjarige leeftijd voor de eerste keer naar school was geweest — waarbij hij de boeken van het hoofd Frater Fulgentius - Wulfers had mogen dragen — zei hij: 'Ik wil óók frater worden', en, toen zijn moeder wat aarzelend keek: 'Nu, ik heb het al lang met frater Fulgentius in orde gemaakt.'

En zo gebeurde het ook. Frits ging op zijn dertiende jaar naar de Kweekschool, kreeg op 25 april 1908 zijn onderwijzersbevoegdheid, en trad op 31 mei van ditzelfde jaar in de Congregatie der Fraters van Onze Lieve Vrouw Moeder van Barmhartigheid te Tilburg, waarbij hij de kloosternaam Realino ontving.

Van 1 mei 1908 tot 1 februari 1915 stond hij achtereenvolgens in vier scholen in Tilburg voor de klas, en daarna tot 1 januari 1917 in 's-Hertogenbosch. Drie maanden later vertrok hij naar Curaçao, waar hij tot 19 februari 1960 bleef.

Frater Realino was een studiehofd. Na een akte Duits L.O. (in 1913) behaalde hij nog een diploma voor Vrije en Ordeoefeningen (1914), de hoofdakke (1916) en (in 1923, op Curaçao) de akke Spaans L.O.

Op Curaçao werd Realino, reeds een goede maand na aankomst, benoemd tot hoofd van het St. Thomas-College, een functie welke hij echter slechts tot december 1919 heeft vervuld.



In deze tijd — toen de onderwijsmogelijkheden op Curaçao nog niet zo heel groot waren — wist hij zich door zelfstudie zo te bekwamen dat hij in staat was op wetenschappelijk gebied twee leerboeken samen te stellen, speciaal bestemd voor het Antilliaanse onderwijs, hetgeen toen stellig iets bijzonders was. In 1929 verscheen er een aardrijkskunde-boekje over de Nederlandse Antillen en de overige eilanden van het Caraïbische Zee, dat in 1931 en 1938 in nieuwe bewerkingen werd herdrukt. In 1935 volgde een Plantkunde van Curaçao, dat in 1947 een tweede druk beleefde. Daarbij bouwde hij naarstig voort aan een bibliotheek van geschriften met betrekking tot West-Indië, vooral op historisch gebied, in het bijzonder gedurende de laatste tien jaren op Curaçao toen hij als archivaris en bibliothecaris op het St. Thomas-College werkzaam was. (Na de opheffing van het St. Thomas-College in augustus 1970, werd deze 'Westindische Bibliotheek' als aparte eenheid opgenomen in de Centrale Bibliotheek van het Fraterhuis te Tilburg.)

Frater Realino werd reeds in 1945 lid van de eerder in dat jaar opgerichte 'Natuurwetenschappelijke Studiekring voor Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen' en was in 1954 medeoprichter van de 'Natuurwetenschappelijke Werkgroep Nederlandse Antillen'. Vele jaren lang was hij Regent van 'Het Curaçaosche Museum.' Bij dit alles bleef hij een bij uitstek rustige en bescheiden figuur, zwijgzaam van aard, die zich nimmer op de voorgrond plaatste. Niemand was dan ook meer verwonderd dan hij, toen hij — om zijn grote verdiensten op onderwijsgebied — op 30 april 1949 werd benoemd tot Ridder in de Orde van Oranje-Nassau.

Met zijn grote kennis van planten en dieren was Realino toch geen veldbioloog; daarvoor zat zijn verlangen naar de studeerkamer te diep en was zijn belangstelling voor ook andere zaken te groot. Van zijn behoefte om zijn kennis van de eilanden te blijven toetsen aan de ontwikkelingen van de wetenschap getuigen de herziene uitgaven van zijn beide schoolboeken. Zo werden in de derde druk van zijn aardrijkskundeboek (wel enigszins ten koste van de homogeniteit van de inhoud) tal van nieuwe gegevens verwerkt, als resultaat van zijn ontmoeting met de leden van de Utrechtse geologische excursie, in 1930 door prof. dr. L.M.R. Rutten naar de Antillen ondernomen.



Deze ontmoeting is niet alleen voor Frater Realino van betekenis geweest. Nog vele keren hebben deelnemers aan deze expeditie, bij herhaalde bezoeken aan Curaçao, de weg naar de koele ontvangkamer van het Sint Thomascollege weten te vinden, om te kunnen praten over de vele dingen waarin men samen belangstelde, onder het genot van een 'potteke bier' en een dikke sigaar van Elisabeth Bas — de vrouw die binnen deze muren het meeste welkom was.

Na zijn terugkeer in Nederland is Frater Realino 'op pensioen' gegaan. Hij heeft toen nog korte tijd gewerkt in de administratie van de centrale studiebibliotheek. Daarna heeft hij alle foto's van de Nederlandse Antillen, die op het archief in grote hoeveelheid aanwezig waren, geordend en beschreven, en vervolgens ook nog die van Suriname en andere gebieden.

De laatste jaren van zijn leven bracht Realino door met studeren. Hij vertaalde veel Spaanse artikelen en maakte daarover massa's aantekeningen — zo'n driehonderd cahiers duidelijk, regelmatig handschrift — in de hoop dat deze later nog eens van nut zouden kunnen zijn.

Hoewel moeilijk ter been en gehinderd door een toenemende doofheid, had hij vrede met zijn oude dag, waarin — tot zijn grote vreugde — het roken van sigaren hem nimmer werd ontzegd.

Realino's plechtige uitvaart in de Kapel van het Moederhuis in Tilburg — waarbij Mgr. H.J.C.M. de Cocq het woord voerde — was een waardig afscheid van iemand die in harmonie met zijn omgeving lange tijd op Curaçao had doorgebracht en daarbij niet anders dan vrienden had ontmoet.

Het lichaam werd begraven op Huize Steenwijk te Vught, 22 februari 1977.



## LIJST VAN PUBLICATIES

in chronologische volgorde

Fr. M. Realino, 1929, *Aardrijkskunde. De eilanden van Nederlandsch West-Indië. De overige eilanden van West-Indië. Venezuela en Columbia*. Uitgave van het St. Thomas-College, Curaçao. Drukkerij van het R.K. Jongensweeshuis, Tilburg; 120 blz. 21 × 14 cm, (69) afb. ('dit schoolboekje is de tweede, vermeerderde druk van: *Aardrijkskunde I. De kolonie Curaçao en de verdere West-Indische eilanden*. 1926. Het werd in 1926 uitgegeven voor het R.K. Lager Onderwijs door Fr. M. Hermenigild . . . , 18 blz. zonder afb.)

Fr. M. Realino, 1931. *Onze eilanden in Nederlandsch West-Indië en de overige eilanden van de Caraïbische Zee, Venezuela en Columbia*. Tweede herziene druk. Idem; 170 blz., (107) afb.

(1934). *Het stadsdistrict Willemstad*. Schaal 1 : 20.000. R.K. Boekhandel St. Augustinus, Curaçao; 2e druk, kaart 22 × 47 cm.

Frater M. Realino, 1934. Curaçao (Algemene beschrijving). *Natuur en Mensch* 54, no. 4-5 (Curaçao nummer), blz. 13-17, (3) afb.

Fr. M. Realino, 1935. *Plantkunde van Curaçao voor M.U.L.O.* R.K. Boekhandel 'St. Augustinus', St. Thomas-College, Curaçao; 133 blz. 23 × 15 cm, (78) afb. (foto's van fr. M. Arnoldo-Broeders; verschenen in maart 1936).

Fr. M. Realino, 1936. *Vragenboekje bij 'Plantkunde van Curaçao . . . '*. Idem; 40 blz.

Fr. M. Realino, 1938. *De Nederlandse Antillen en de overige eilanden van de Caraïbische Zee, Venezuela en Colombia*. Derde herziene druk. Idem; 214 blz., (163 + 1) afb.

Fr. M. Realino, 1940. *Schoolatlasje behorend bij De Nederlandse Antillen . . .*  Idem; 32 blz.

Fr. M. Realino, 1941. *Vragenboekje bij 'De Nederlandse Antillen . . . '* 2e druk. R.K. Boekhandel 'St. Augustinus' Curaçao; 26 (+ 6) blz. 20 × 14½ cm.

(1943?). *MULO-dierkunde*. (Curaçao), (34 + 28) blz. 18 × 22 cm stencil met afb.

Fr. M. Realino, 1947. *Plantkunde van Curaçao voor M.U.L.O.* Tweede druk. Idem; 188 blz., 209 afb.

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Fr. Realino, 1949. Aruba. *De Katholieke Encyclopaedie*, Tweede druk, deel 3, kolom 142-150, 2 kaarten, 4 foto's op 2 platen buiten de tekst.

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Fr. M. Realino Janssen, 1961. In memoriam Frater M. Radulphus, 1869-1961. *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 41, blz. 61-64, portret buiten de tekst.

Bij gelegenheid van Fr. Realino's 86ste verjaardag verscheen er een artikel in *La Union* (12 Nov. '75). Na zijn overlijden verschenen er stukjes van de hand van fr. Wibertus Rietman in de *Beurs*, de *Amigoe* (23 febr.) en *La Union* (2 maart).

De schrijver van dit artikel is de heer A.F. Janssen (jongere broer van Fr. Realino) en Fr. Caesario Peters (archivaris van het Fraterhuis in Tilburg) dankbaar voor het verstrekken van enkele gegevens welke in dit In Memoriam konden worden verwerkt.

P. WAGENAAR HUMMELINCK



*Fa joe kan tak' mi no moi. Inleiding in de flora en vegetatie van Suriname*, onder redactie van A.M.W. Mennega. *Deel 1: Flora (plantenbeschrijvingen)*, door J.G. Wessels Boer, W.H.A. Hekking en J.P. Schulz. *Natuurgids serie B no. 4*, Stinasu, Paramaribo, 1976, p. 1-129 en 130-293, ill. (Sf 16,50; verkrijgbaar in Nederland door overschrijving van f 25,- + f 4,- op giro 273185 van mevr. dr. A.M.W. Mennega te Bilthoven onder vermelding 'Wandelflora').

Deze twee boekjes — samen *Surinaamse Wandelflora* genoemd — bevatten beschrijvingen en figuren van 234 wilde plantesoorten uit Suriname die door de gewone burger in het ontsloten deel van dat land kunnen worden waargenomen. Die beschrijvingen en ook die figuren mogen zonder meer uitstekend genoemd worden. Bij het kiezen van de soorten heeft als criterium gegolden dat iedere Surinaamse plantenfamilie door één of enkele karakteristieke en tevens algemeen voorkomende soorten vertegenwoordigd moest zijn. De aldus tot stand gekomen selectie is derhalve klein, maar geeft desondanks een vrij representatief beeld van de flora van het bestreken gebied. Hiertoe wordt nog bijgedragen door de meer algemene aantekeningen over de betreffende families, waarbij vaak bekende maar niet opgenomen soorten (w.o. ook cultuurgewassen en ook niet-Surinaamse) worden aangehaald.

Aan de plantebeschrijvingen gaan twee hoofdstukken vooraf, resp. geheten 'Inleiding' en 'Iets over systematiek, vorm en bouw van planten'. Deze twee bevatten wat hun titel doet veronderstellen, het tweede bovendien een duidelijke uiteenzetting over de rol van de groene planten in de biosfeer en in het bijzonder over hun betekenis voor de mensen. Achteraan vinden we een verklarend register van termen en een register van plantennamen, beide onmisbare onderdelen.

Het lijkt aannemelijk, dat het met behulp van deze wandelflora mogelijk is een algemeen beeld van de floristische verscheidenheid van het bereikbare deel van Suriname te verkrijgen. Na enige oefening zal het de geïnteresseerde en enigszins ontwikkelde leek wellicht in de meeste gevallen gelukken al bladerend en lezend een gevonden plant bij de juiste familie thuis te brengen. Daarbij zal het dan echter veelal moeten blijven. De kans dat men toevallig een opgenomen soort te pakken heeft, blijft natuurlijk klein.

Tot zover kan de bespreking van doel, opzet, inhoud en uitvoering van deze flora lovend zijn. Er is echter ook aanleiding tot enige serieuze kritiek.

In taalkundig opzicht laat de flora te wensen over op een aantal punten, van welke ik de voornaamste noemen wil. Het is duidelijk, dat de schrijvers hun best hebben gedaan zich in hun taalgebruik aan dat van Suriname aan te passen, maar ze zijn daarin niet steeds voldoende geslaagd. Bijvoorbeeld: 'ruderaal' had in het register verklaard moeten worden, 'ruigte' is in Suriname een volstrekt onbekend woord, en men mag zich afvragen hoeveel Surinamers zich iets kunnen voorstellen bij 'zalmkleurig', 'steenrood' of zelfs 'dakpansgewijs'.

Bij de volksnamen worden dezelfde categorieën onderscheiden als door Ostendorf (*Nuttige planten en sierplanten in Suriname*, 1962), maar het gebeurt



hier minder nauwkeurig. Verder betekent deze overname helaas ook, dat er bij de Surinaams-Nederlandse en zelfs bij de 'standaard'-Nederlandse namen soms gerept wordt van een 'feitelijk onjuiste naam'. Hier wordt volkomen ten onrechte gesuggereerd, dat er een verband zou bestaan of behoren te bestaan tussen wetenschappelijke namen en volksnamen. Een voorbeeld: alleen Liliaceae zouden lelie mogen heten; bij een andere plant met die naam wordt in deze flora het woord lelie tussen aanhalingstekens gezet, dus: Braziliaanse 'lelie', water-'lelie', e.d. Zo ook: 'amandel'-boom, bos-'katoen', bos-'druif', bos-'roos', ster-'appel', wilde 'pinda', 'mispel', etc. Soms wordt 't vergeten, bijv. bij bosananas, matrozenroos en matrozendruif. De schrijvers blijken warempel te vinden, dat we dat in Nederland ook zouden moeten doen: zie niet alleen de al genoemde water-'lelie', die in Nederland evenmin als in Suriname een Liliacee is, maar ook de water-'hyacint', een puur Nederlandse naam! Stel je voor: dag-'lelie', ster-'hyacint', Engels 'gras', 'look'-zonder-look, etc., etc., etc.

Nog een Nederlandse naamkwestie. Het lijkt me, gezien de grote verschillen geen goed idee om de Surinaamse terrestrische *Utricularia*'s de naam op te plakken van de Nederlandse aquatische, nl. blaasjeskruid.

In de Sranan namen zitten een paar merkwaardige fouten. Uit de *Woordenlijst* (Bureau Volkslectuur, 1961) is de drukfout soensaka voor soersaka (= zuurzak, NB) consequent overgenomen en verder vermelden tekst en register 'redi paka' voor *Aciotis fragilis*, een plant die bladeren heeft met een opvallend rode achterkant (Sranan: redi baka) en daarom zo heet. Je zou haast gaan denken, dat de auteurs geen van allen ook maar een flauw idee van het Sranan hebben, ondanks de titel van de flora (zie boven), die de eerste regel is van een voorin afgedrukt gedicht. Van wie is dat eigenlijk?

Dan nog iets over de achtergrond waartegen deze flora gezien moet worden. Uit het feit, dat de redactie berust bij dr. Mennega, hoewel zij noch tot de auteurs van dit eerste deel, noch tot die van het tweede — te schrijven door dr. Schulz en handelende over de vegetatie — behoort, zal het een ieder duidelijk zijn, dat de verschijning in de eerste plaats aan haar ijveren te danken is. Het is te begrijpen, dat zij, met haar pensionering in het nabije verschiet, nu eindelijk wel eens een floristisch werk voor gewone Surinamers het Instituut voor Systematische Plantkunde van de Utrechtse universiteit wilde zien verlaten. Want dáár is deze flora toch in elkaar gezet. Zij verdient daarvoor in Suriname grote dankbaarheid. Echter, het is óók daar, dat men al vele, vele jaren geleden Suriname een echte zakflora in het vooruitzicht heeft gesteld. Een flora waarmee alle planten van het gebied dat door deze wandelflora bestreken wordt, op naam zullen kunnen worden gebracht. Wanneer deze wandelflora de voltooiing van de zakflora niet zal stimuleren maar nog weer verder op de lange baan zal doen schuiven — en dat is te vrezen, 'ze hebben nu toch iets' — is het maar zeer de vraag of Suriname nu wel zo blij moet zijn.

'Wandelflora': een neologisme en, naar ik vermoed, ook een eufemisme. Jammer genoeg zijn de boekjes zo primitief in elkaar geniet, dat men er niet gauw toe zal komen ze bij zich te steken. Je kunt ze nl. niet open neerleggen, er zijn twee handen voor nodig om ze open te houden. En het zal ook wel niet meevallen om te voorkomen dat de mooie kaftjes er al gauw afgaan.

J. van Donselaar



- × *St. Eustatius. A short history of the island and its monuments*, door Y. (Ypie) Attema. De Walburg Pers, Zutphen, Nov. 1976, 87 blz., 26 figuren op 16 platen buiten de tekst (f 15,—).

In vergelijking met die voor Curaçao is de wetenschappelijke belangstelling voor St. Eustatius altijd maar gering geweest. Wanneer er al aandacht aan dit eiland en zijn bevolking werd besteed, dan gebeurde dit altijd in verhandelingen over 'de Bovenwindse Eilanden'. Pas in de 70-er jaren kwam daarin verandering. Eén van de eerste belangrijke publikaties was de gestencilde doctoraal-scriptie van W. van den Bor: *Not too bad* (Wageningen, 1973); een andere het hier te bespreken boek van Ypie Attema. Mevrouw Attema was één van de vier studenten die in 1972 op initiatief van prof. dr. C.L. Temminck Groll en gesubsidieerd door Sticusa voor een maand naar St. Eustatius werden uitgezonden om daar een inventaris te maken van de historische monumenten. Bij deze inventarisatie behoorde ook een archiefonderzoek, een en ander met het doel een goede bescherming en een restauratie van deze monumenten mogelijk te maken.

Een van de resultaten van deze uitzending was het in Jrg. 50, no. 1 van dit tijdschrift besproken *Conserveringsplan voor het eiland Sint Eustatius* van H.J.F. de Roy van Zuydewijn (Delft, 1974), een ander het boek van Ypie Attema, dat blijkens de prospectus van de uitgever speciaal samengesteld werd ter gelegenheid van de 'bicentennial': het feit dat het in 1976 tweehonderd jaar geleden was dat de Amerikaanse vlag voor het eerst in het buitenland met saluutschoten werd begroet. Het is een fraai en uiterst leesbaar werk, met een Engelse en een (wat kortere) Nederlandse tekst en vele met zorg uitgezochte illustraties.

Omdat aan deze publicatie mede archiefonderzoek ten grondslag ligt, herhaalt de schrijfster gelukkig niet de bekende onjuistheden, zoals over 'het' saluutschot. Ook zet zij helder uiteen dat niet de aanval van Rodney in 1771 de oorzaak was van het verval van de Gouden Rots, maar veranderingen in het patroon van de internationale handel en de vele machtswisselingen ná Rodney's overval (met name het Engelse bestuur van 1801-1802), gedurende welk de handel geheel tot stilstand kwam.

Aan het einde van haar boek pleit de schrijfster voor het aanmoedigen van een kleinschalig toerisme (van historisch geïnteresseerde bezoekers). Een dergelijke ontwikkeling zou een verlichting kunnen betekenen voor de nood op dit arme eiland. Gezien de ongunstige neven-effecten van het toerisme op vele plaatsen elders in het Caraïbisch gebied, is het echter te hopen dat de nodige maatregelen worden getroffen om zo'n kleinschaligheid te waarborgen, zodat het eiland niet overwoekerd wordt door een toeristen-industrie.

Tenslotte nog een enkele opmerking: geen enkele publikatie wordt gespaard voor drukfouten zoals *relatiatory* i.p.v. *retaliatory* (p. 20); *incorrect* is echter *governor* als vertaling voor *gezaghebber* (p. 46) en zeker wanneer er staat 'Each island now has a governor or administrator'. De zin zou moeten luiden '... a *lt.* governor or *an* administrator'. De op St. Maarten zetelende functionaris is zowel *Gezaghebber* van St. Maarten, als van het 'Eilandgebied De Bovenwindse Eilanden'. Op Saba en St. Eustatius elk wordt hij vertegenwoordigd door een *Administrateur*.

Een dergelijk schoonheidsfoutje daargelaten kan echter gesteld worden dat Ypie Attema velen een dienst heeft bewezen met haar voortreffelijke boek over St. Eustatius.

L.J. van der Steen



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H.U.E. THODEN VAN VELZEN



## THE ORIGINS OF THE GAAN GADU MOVEMENT OF THE BUSH NEGROES OF SURINAM

In the early 1890s, the Bush Negroes of Surinam's coastal plain were restive. From the far-away Tapanahoni, the heartland of the Djuka Bush Negroes,<sup>1</sup> word had reached them of the appearance of a powerful and vindictive God called *Gaan Gadu* (Great Deity) or *Gaan Tata* (Great Father).<sup>2</sup> This God, they were told, would wage unrelenting war on the witches. The cadavers of such nefarious persons would be dumped into the undergrowth along certain creeks where carrion birds would pick out their eyes and caimans tear at their bowels. All possessions of those who, upon their death, were believed to be witches were to be confiscated by *Gaan Gadu's* priests and carried to Santi Goon on the Tapanahoni, the god's sacred bush shrine.

In 1891 the first tidings came almost simultaneously from two different places. Carpenters building a mission post on the Cottica river reported that there had been a gathering of hundreds of Bush Negroes in the nearby village of Moarimbo-moffo (see fig. 1), where emissaries from the Tapanahoni had disclosed *Gaan Gadu's* commandments. These instructions concerned many spheres of life, from religious worship to marital relationships (BHW 1892: 142). At Koffiekamp, a small Christian community near the confluence of Sara creek and Suriname river, a missionary heard similar news (BHW 1892: 139-141). Here, the messengers from the Tapanahoni warned the heathen majority of the Djuka, located in the Sara creek region, that all places of worship should thereafter be dedicated solely to *Gaan Gadu*. All the old obi or *obia* were to be



thrown into the river or burnt in fire, and shrines of the 'false gods' of the past demolished.

The new movement made rapid headway. By 1893 it had established itself as the most powerful cult in Djuka communities of the coastal plain. Soon it made inroads into the territory of other tribal groups as well. A few years before the turn of the century, the new ritual centres on the Tapanahoni drew scores of believers from Saramaka villages (Spalburg 1869-1900).<sup>3</sup> In 1893, *Gaan Gadu's* priests made converts among the Matawai, no small accomplishment as this had been the first tribal group to embrace Christianity a few decades earlier. In 1895, in the far west, even the small and remote group of Kwinti came under the spell of *Gaan Gadu* (Kraag 1894-1896).

From the beginning the village of Santigron, with its mixed population of Djuka, Saramaka and Matawai, was a stronghold of *Gaan Gadu*. It was from here that *Gaan Gadu's* advocates travelled south to Matawai villages in 1892 and 1893. Its location less than twenty kilometers from Paramaribo, the capital of Surinam, made Santigron a place of pilgrimage for many city Creoles who had heard about the new god's reputation (De Ziel 1973: 40). Special expeditions were organized by Christian missions to preach against the 'false god' and undo the impact of *Gaan Gadu's* message on their Matawai following (BHW 1895: 12-42). Despite their efforts to wipe out the cult from what they considered a Christian preserve, the missionaries were only partly successful; a quarter of a century later *Gaan Gadu* was still worshipped in secret in a few Matawai villages.<sup>4</sup>

Around 1895, lines of communication had been established among the various oracles and shrines of *Gaan Gadu*. Leading priests at the Tapanahoni centres kept in touch with Saramaka acolytes in villages on the Suriname river and its tributaries (NB 1904: 255). Messengers travelled from the Tapanahoni to the men in charge at the Cottica shrines in the northeastern part of the country. These priests in turn were in communication with colleagues in the northwest and west, in places such as Santigron (NB 1892: 574) and Kriki-Pandasi on the Sara



creek (MBB 1893: 181). Even in the 1920s, there were still lines of communication with Sara creek villagers and with a Saramaka village on the Pikin Rio, a tributary of the Suriname river (Junker 1923).

The organization of the cult was centralized and hierarchical. Bush Negroes from other rivers visited the ritual centre on the Tapanahoni. Hegemony was also asserted through the constant flow of tribute to the Tapanahoni shrines. In 1894, every settlement on the Cottica and Commewijne rivers which boasted of a headman, had to pay a special tax of 128 florins (then US \$ 51) to the *Gaan Gadu* priests of the Tapanahoni (MBB 1895: 53). In 1917, a small Saramaka village paid 320 florins for the right to open a *Gaan Gadu* shrine, an enormous sum of money at that time, more than what most labourers in Paramaribo would earn in a whole year (Junker 1925: 154). A new religious duty obligated followers to bring the material legacies of deceased witches to the Tapanahoni shrines (MT 1896: 76). Leerdam (1957: April 23) observed how the effects of the dead found guilty of witchcraft were transported with great difficulty from the Sara creek valley to Dritabiki on the Tapanahoni.<sup>5</sup>

No religious movement of the Bush Negroes ever met with so much success as the *Gaan Gadu* cult. For three decades, it enjoyed great influence in all the Bush Negro regions of the interior. After 1920, its fortunes began to ebb; what was once a vigorous regional cult fractured into a number of local congregations (Thoden van Velzen 1977). Lines of communication were disrupted and the Tapanahoni centre began to lose control over its various branches in other parts of Surinam. Yet, decades later, the *Gaan Gadu* oracles continued to be paramount in the Tapanahoni region. In the 1960s, parochial, but thriving *Gaan Gadu* cults attracted scores of patients and supplicants. During 1962, the oracle at Dritabiki was consulted on approximately 125 days regarding a total of 424 cases. Most of the clientele of the oracle were residents of Tapanahoni villages, while only a sprinkling came from other Djuka areas or from the Saramaka and Aluku Bush Negroes.



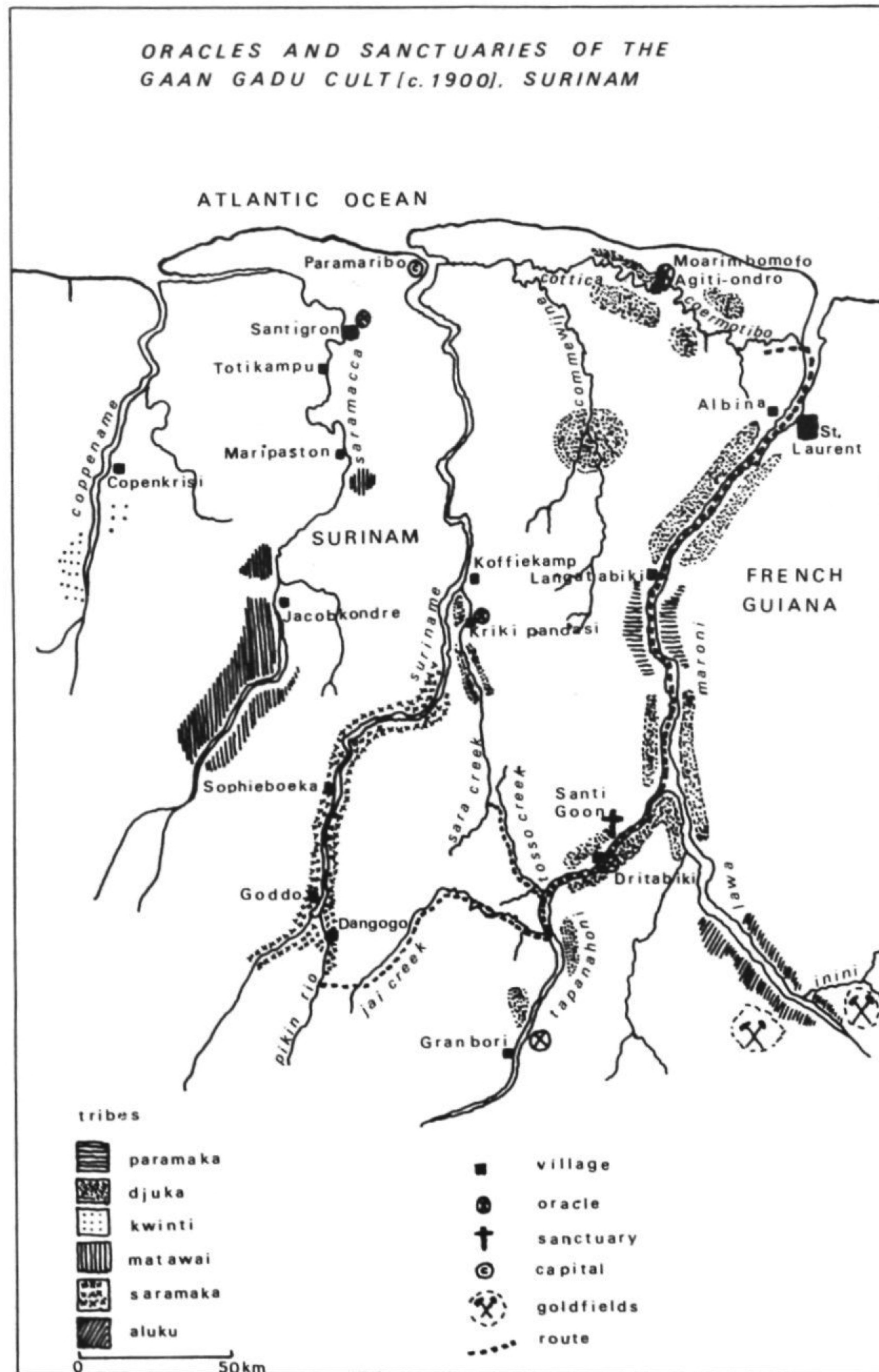


Fig. 1. Oracles and sanctuaries of the Gaan Gadu cult (c. 1900). Surinam.



In view of the expansion and vigour of the *Gaan Gadu* cult, it is not astounding that it received a great deal of attention from missionaries, civil servants and anthropologists. Today a list of all publications referring to the movement would be several pages long. However, there is very little to learn from these sources about the early history of the movement, its causes and the events that triggered it. In fact, we are offered contradictory information even about the time of its ascent. Some mention 1879 as the year of its birth (Voorhoeve & van Renselaar 1962: 203), others 1891 (Schneider 1893: 64; Steinberg 1933: 267) or 1890 (Van Panhuys 1908: 38).

The reasons for these unresolved problems are not difficult to grasp. Very few Europeans visited the remote Tapanahoni at the end of the 19th century and, of those who did, few cared to leave written accounts of their sojourns. Gold-diggers passing through the area were too much in a hurry and had other aims to pursue. The publications available<sup>6</sup> offer a few interesting clues, but none of them renders a full account of the beginnings of the cult.

A later generation of writers on Bush Negro society tried their hand at historical reconstruction. Their theories roughly fall into two categories. On the one hand, there are those that stress continuity, explaining events as the outcome of a power struggle between two Djuka leaders which was compounded by the intervention of the colonial administration. An opposing set of interpretations points to a revolutionary break in the religious history of the Djuka Bush Negroes. I will review both theories briefly, before presenting new material from archival and oral sources on the early history of the *Gaan Gadu* cult.<sup>7</sup>

### *The continuity thesis*

Willem van Lier opened the discussion in 1919 with his *Iets over de Boschnegers in de Boven-Marowijne* (Some Facts about the Bush Negroes of the Upper Maroni), a delightful little book that covered approximately the half century before 1920. Van Lier employed concepts such as 'aristocrats',



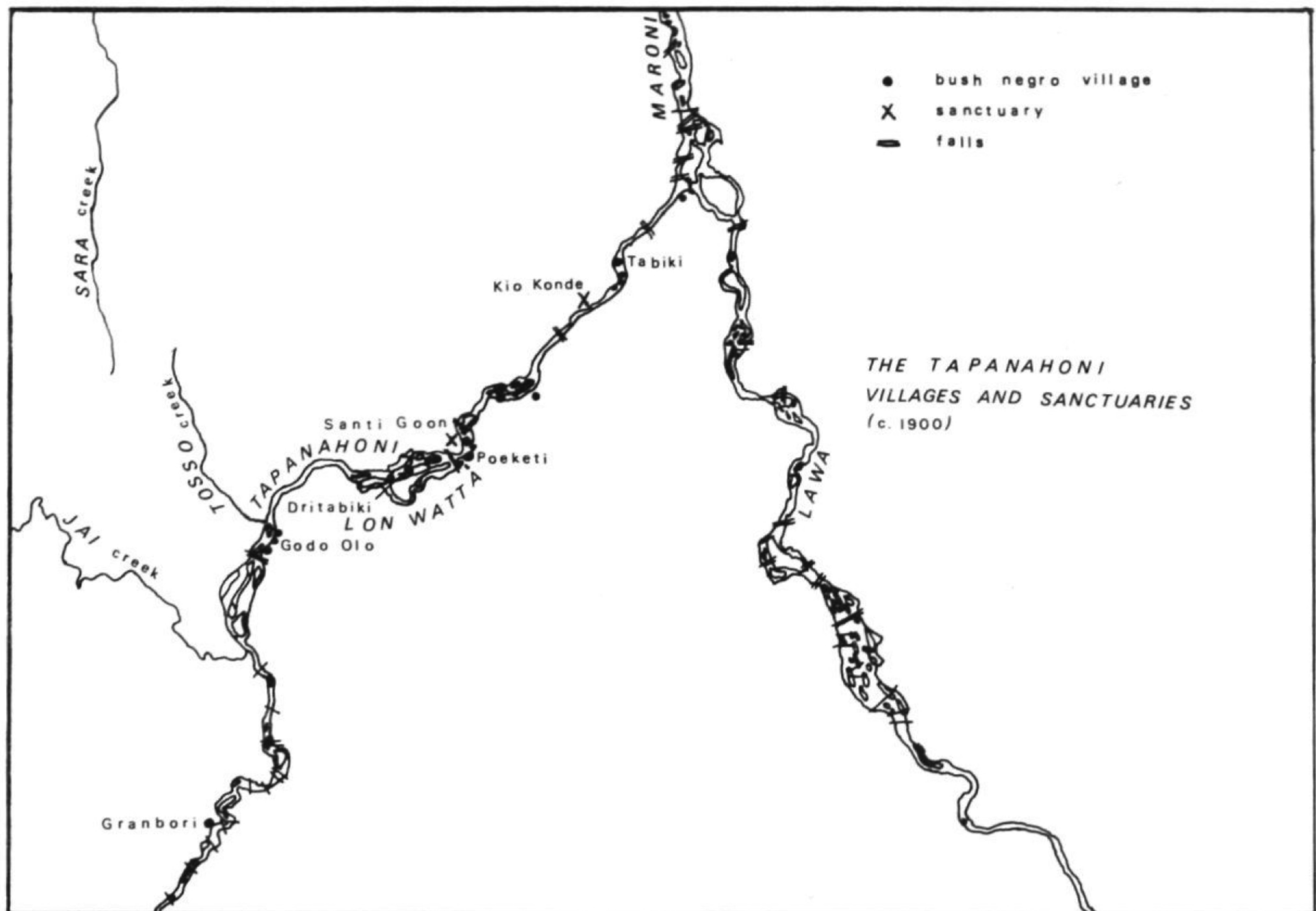


Fig. 2. The Tapanahoni villages and sanctuaries (c. 1900).



'plebeians', 'progressives' and 'conservatives' and, although these distinctions are somewhat artificial, behind his *tour de force* is the desire to treat Bush Negro society seriously. The book is a goldmine for Djuka history, crammed with historical details, but cast in a mould that reflected the position of one of the contending factions, that of the paramount chief Oseisie (1884-1915). Here is Van Lier's version.



Fig. 3. Da Labi Agumasakka ('Sakka') in 1904. From: Franssen Herderschee (1905 : 927).



In 1882, the old paramount chief (*Gaanman*) of the Djuka, Blijmoffo, died. The tribal council of village headmen and other influential elders picked Oseisie for the succession, passing over his maternal uncle Da Labi Agumasakka (or 'Sakka' as he was regularly called) who had coveted the position for years. Leadership relations were considerably complicated by the circumstance that Sakka was custodian of the *Gaan Gadu* shrines and had the benefit of years of training in the ritual and the sacred lore of the cult. For Van Lier, *Gaan Gadu* or *Gaan Tata* was an old tribal cult dating back to the war of independence. Whoever commanded at its holy places could, by virtue of this fact, claim to be recognized as a tribal leader. That Oseisie was promoted over his head was hard for Sakka to swallow and he had no intention of forsaking his other prerogatives.

The situation worsened when the Dutch began to pursue an active interest in the southeast corner of Surinam where gold had been found. With the need for Djuka Bush Negro labour in mind, they courted Oseisie. In 1891, Oseisie's salary was boosted from fl. 150 per annum to fl. 1,000 and he received favours and personal assurances of sympathy and support. Once Oseisie knew he could count on the backing of the Dutch, he assumed a more aggressive posture with Sakka. Oseisie demanded that Sakka accept him as a priest with the same privileges that Sakka enjoyed. In particular, Oseisie demanded the right to fabricate the holy cord (*gadu tetei*), the principal amulet providing protection against witchcraft. What Oseisie, in fact, was asking for was 'a piece of the action', a share in the considerable emoluments that flowed into the coffers of the *Gaan Gadu* custodian.

It was the conjunction of these developments that led Sakka to decide to leave his ancestral village of Dritabiki and found Granbori (1891), two days upstream by dug-out canoe. It was here that the new headquarters for *Gaan Gadu* was established. Many relatives joined Sakka as did followers from many other Djuka villages.

For about a decade Oseisie resigned himself to playing second fiddle to Sakka. Then he struck back by fabricating his



own *Gaan Gadu* shrine and oracle. Eventually Sakka choose to accept that situation and in September 1903<sup>8</sup> a great feast of reconciliation was held at Dritabiki. Thereafter, with friction but never an open schism, two Popes ruled the *Gaan Gadu* cult: Sakka at Granbori and Oseisie at Dritabiki. After 1915, when both men died, the two oracles of *Gaan Gadu* continued their independent existence.

*The revolutionary break theory*

In his manuscript *Boschnegeriana*, Morssink (1934) expounds a quite different view, although he starts his argument in a way similar to Van Lier. Oseisie waited until some time after his inauguration in 1888 before laying claim to the *Gaan Gadu* or *Gaan Tata* priesthood. A delicate rift had always existed between Oseisie and Sakka which now appeared to deepen dangerously. Then, just in time, a sudden unexpected windfall prevented outright war between the two men. In the 1880s, gold had been found in the interior and thousands of treasure hunters were lured to penetrate ever deeper into the interior. For the Bush Negroes, the gold industry brought with it the sudden expansion of economic opportunities. Bush Negroes manned the dug-out canoes that carried the gold-diggers, their equipment and victuals 200 miles into the jungle to the placers. The transport carriers earned much more money in their new trade than they had formerly gained in lumber work.

In Morssink's interpretation, the newly earned hundreds of French francs and Dutch guilders in the hands of younger tribesmen caused Sakka and Oseisie to forget their squabbles and cooperate in an effort to skim off some of the money of these *nouveaux riches*. But, they needed a powerful bait to lure the independent boatmen to Dritabiki, somewhat off the travelled Maroni-Lawa river routes used by the gold-diggers. The two shrewd men — in Morssink's account — turned to an *obia* that had served their ancestors well in the 18th century war of independence by helping them find their way through the jungle and by directing their fighting. Oseisie and Sakka



knew that the wealthy boatmen dreaded the witches, less fortunate neighbours and kinsmen who, envious of their riches, were prepared to commit heinous crimes for getting their share. Sakka and Oseisie dug up the old *Gaan Gadu* war *obia*, buried at the holy place of Santi Goon, and brought a part of it back triumphantly to Dritabiki. The boatmen were guaranteed that this *obia* would give them protection against the witches as nothing else could. The plan worked. The transport carriers flocked to the *Gaan Gadu* shrine at Dritabiki, and Sakka and Oseisie lined their pockets with the handsome fees that grateful boat owners brought them. To Morssink's mind, this was the way in which the older men continued to exploit their sons and younger relatives.

Some years later, the two men fell out again, this time over the division of spoils. In anger, Sakka left Dritabiki to found Granbori and he took the *Gaan Gadu obia* with him. Oseisie found himself on the ruins of his former estate. He realized he was deprived of a good part of his income, without the prestige that is conferred on the custodian of a great *obia* and without the power to manipulate public opinion with oracular verdicts. Oseisie returned to the holy place of Santi Goon, dug up the old *obia* and, as Sakka had done before him, fabricated his own holy bundle by placing a small part of the old war *obia* in it. For a few years both shrines competed for the favours of the faithful. But ill health brought Oseisie to heel and in his despondency he realized there was only one great medicineman to turn to: Sakka. With the latter's help Oseisie recovered and good relationships were restored. A time of respectful coexistence ensued, bolstered up with price agreements for the main amulets sold and services rendered.

Some of Morssink's gibes are quite unpalatable, as when he harps on the theme of shrewd old men scheming to keep a hold over their many wives.<sup>9</sup> Another drawback in Morssink's account is that he exaggerated the conscious manipulation of religious institutions on the part of both Sakka and Oseisie. Things were more complicated than that, as I hope to show. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that Morssink was the first to grasp the significance of the altering forces of pro-



duction. In the 1880s, within only a few years, the Djuka had given up lumbering for the much more lucrative business of transporting gold-diggers. Morssink rightly wished to understand changes in Djuka institutions by placing them against the backdrop of these alterations.

*The new Gaan Tata or Gaan Gadu cults*

Both the accounts of Van Lier and Morssink bring valuable points of view. There certainly was continuity, as suggested by Van Lier, in the sense that a *Gaan Tata* cult existed long before 1891. Its major shrine was at Dritabiki, while subsidiary ones were situated in a few Saramaka villages on the Pikin Rio and Gaan Rio rivers and probably also at Sophieboeka or Dombikondre on the Suriname river.<sup>10</sup> However, the *Gaan Tata* cult of the Djuka and Saramaka was not identical with the movement that spread so rapidly through Surinam's interior in 1891, although the latter one was also known as the *Gaan Tata* cult. The old *Gaan Tata* cult simply was absorbed into the new movement, as happened to a few other Djuka cults. The *Gaan Tata* or *Gaan Gadu* movement that emerged in the 1890s, contained radically new features and these were visible to contemporaries. A few opinions from people who lived in these times and were well acquainted with Bush Negro religious life follow.

Kersten, a missionary who spent some years at Albina, and was in daily contact with Bush Negroes, made a trip to Dritabiki in 1895. 'Seven or eight years ago', he (1896: 185) wrote, 'Oseisie had instituted the *Gaan Tata* movement at the prompting of Sakka'. Buck, another missionary of the Congregation of Moravian Brethren, who was stationed on the Cottica river from 1892 until 1895, wrote in a similar vein (1896: 67): 'The supreme God who makes decisions about everything is *Gaan Tata*. But his power is of recent date. Formerly, the God *Sweli* ruled the Djuka people'.

Of particular importance is the testimony of the Matawai Bush Negro Johannes King, a prophet and visionary who



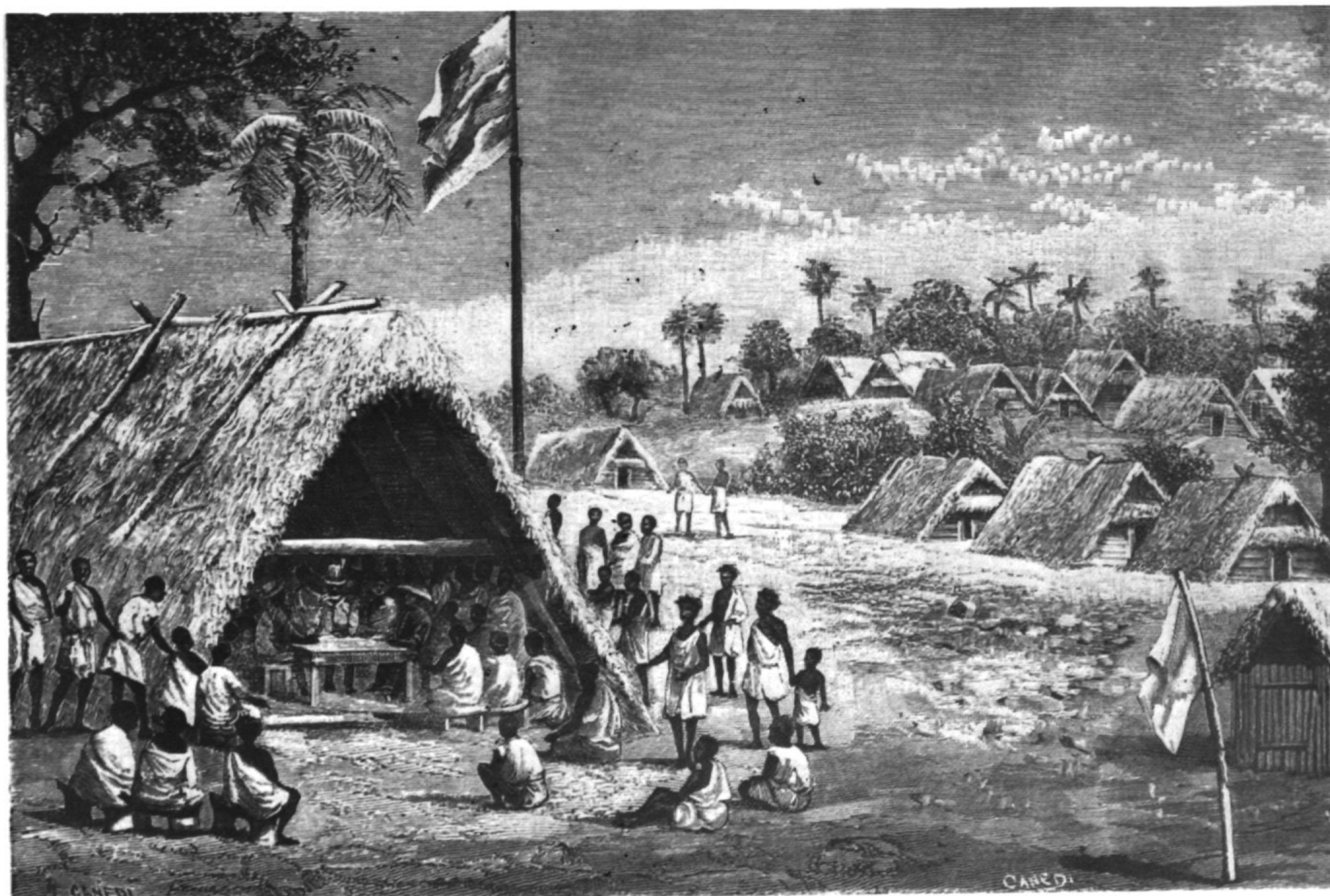


Fig. 4. Poeketi in 1886. From: Brunetti (1890).



brought the Matawai into the Christian fold. King knew the Djuka quite well; his father was a Djuka and Johannes King had visited with his father's relatives on the Tapanahoni in 1865. King maintained contact with Djuka settlers on the lower Saramacca and other coastal areas. During 1893 and 1894, he frequently referred in his diaries to 'this false and new God *Gaan Tata*' (De Ziel 1973: 121-122).

Those Djuka who actually lived on the Tapanahoni at the turn of the century were quite convinced that this cult was something new, as we know from the diaries of the teacher Spalburg (1896-1900) who had his residence at Dritabiki during the last years of the preceding century. One entry in his diary is particularly interesting. In June 1898, thousands of birds swarmed over the unharvested rice fields of the Djuka. A few men explained to Spalburg that the swarms of birds visiting them was punishment for Sakka's sins, who had dared to substitute the worship of the Spirit for the old, time-honoured ancestor worship.

A new movement thus, known under many names: *Gaan Tata*, *Gaan Gadu*, *Gaan Obia*. To distinguish it from its predecessors it will hereafter be called the *Gaan Gadu* cult. We should now turn to some new material from archives and oral history to reconstruct the beginnings of the new cult.

#### *Sakka controls the obia*

A digression on the concept of *obia* is now in order. According to the Djuka, enormous powers dwell in the universe, most of these untapped by and in fact even unknown to men. An *obia* is that part of these forces that has become available to mankind, is beneficial to human beings and has assumed a definite shape so that it can be distinguished from other such supernatural forces. An *obia* may choose any sort of vessel; an amulet, a bundle and even an human being. The medicines of the Europeans are also called *obia*. What sets an *obia* apart from other supernatural forces is the beneficial influence it manifests, with healing of body and soul as the ultimate criterium.



The control by humans over *obia* varies considerably. On the one hand, there is the ordinary amulet that brings its blessing almost automatically, though this is contingent upon the observance of a few rules such as not eating the meat of certain animals. On the other hand there are those *obia* that have to be worked and fought for. Their power can only be briefly harnessed by adhering strictly to all rules and prescriptions, performing the required libations and avoiding to give any displeasure to the *obia*. Quite often, harmonious relations among relatives are a necessary condition for the proper functioning of the *obia*.

Three *obia* were particularly relevant to Djuka society in the 1880s. First, there was the *Sweli obia*, a supernatural force residing in a small bundle kept in a shrine at Dritabiki. Humans could come into contact with this *obia* by drinking its sacred potion (*diingi sweli*) while swearing an oath. In 1760, when Dutch emissaries came to negotiate peace with the Djuka, they concluded their talks by drinking a potion in which a few drops of blood from each of the negotiators were mingled (Hartsinck 1770: 800). They were drinking the *Sweli obia*. In the 19th century, Dutch officials and even businessmen who had come to conclude treaties or agreements with the Djuka also had to take the blood oath; while swearing to uphold the conditions of the agreement they drank the potion (Coster 1866: 3-4). All Djuka adults, males and females, were obliged to take this oath. One could only become a true and respected member of the tribal community by taking part in the ritual. Allegiance was sworn to the Djuka nation and to one's fellow tribesman (cf. Lenoir 1974).

In later times, the oath came to be interpreted more and more as an ordeal. Those who had perpetrated acts of witchcraft would be killed; those who were innocent could expect protection against the witches by an infusion of power (*kaaki-ti*) coming from the sacred potion. At the end of the 19th century, the oath taking was delegated to the leaders of matrilineal kin groups and village headmen and was to be renewed every three or four years. Additionally, those who had come



under suspicion of witchcraft would either come voluntarily to Dritabiki to cleanse their reputations or could be called to appear for the undergoing of the ordeal. Control over this *obia* was vested in the elders of Dritabiki's main lineages: the Black lineage of the Oto clan and two lineages of the Misidjan clan. Among the small group of elders who could administer the oath, Sakka was undoubtedly *primus inter pares*.

From their control of the *Sweli obia* the custodians derived considerable power. It was their privilege and duty to interpret signs of malady in the oath takers for approximately a week after the ritual. If they decided that symptoms of minor physical distress were revealing *Sweli's* punishment for transgression of his holy laws, they could then cleanse the patient by subjecting him to additional ritual for which fees would be exacted. If, however, the patient suffered agonies and died within a week, this was interpreted as a punishment for witchcraft. The corpse would be brought to a creek near Santi Goon and thrown into the undergrowth. No rites, wailing or other signs of grief were allowed for such cases. The possessions of these persons were confiscated, with part of it left at *Sweli's* shrine at Santi Goon, part of it returned to the relatives, while a considerable portion of it was kept by *Sweli's* priests as a compensation for their work.

There was also an extra source of power attached to *Sweli*. In the shrine a small bundle was stored containing hair and nail parings of dignitaries who had served *Sweli* in the past. The bundle could be interpreted as any ordinary 'carry oracle', a technique to be discussed later. This was a way to consult *Sweli* indirectly because the ghosts of this prominent group of ancestors were considered to be in contact with *Sweli* in the hereafter. The consultation of the oracle was always done in the seclusion of the *Sweli* shrine with only a handful of priests present. The oracle was believed to be particularly relevant to all living priests of the *Sweli* cult and their closest relatives and as such usually was not consulted for matters pertaining to other people.



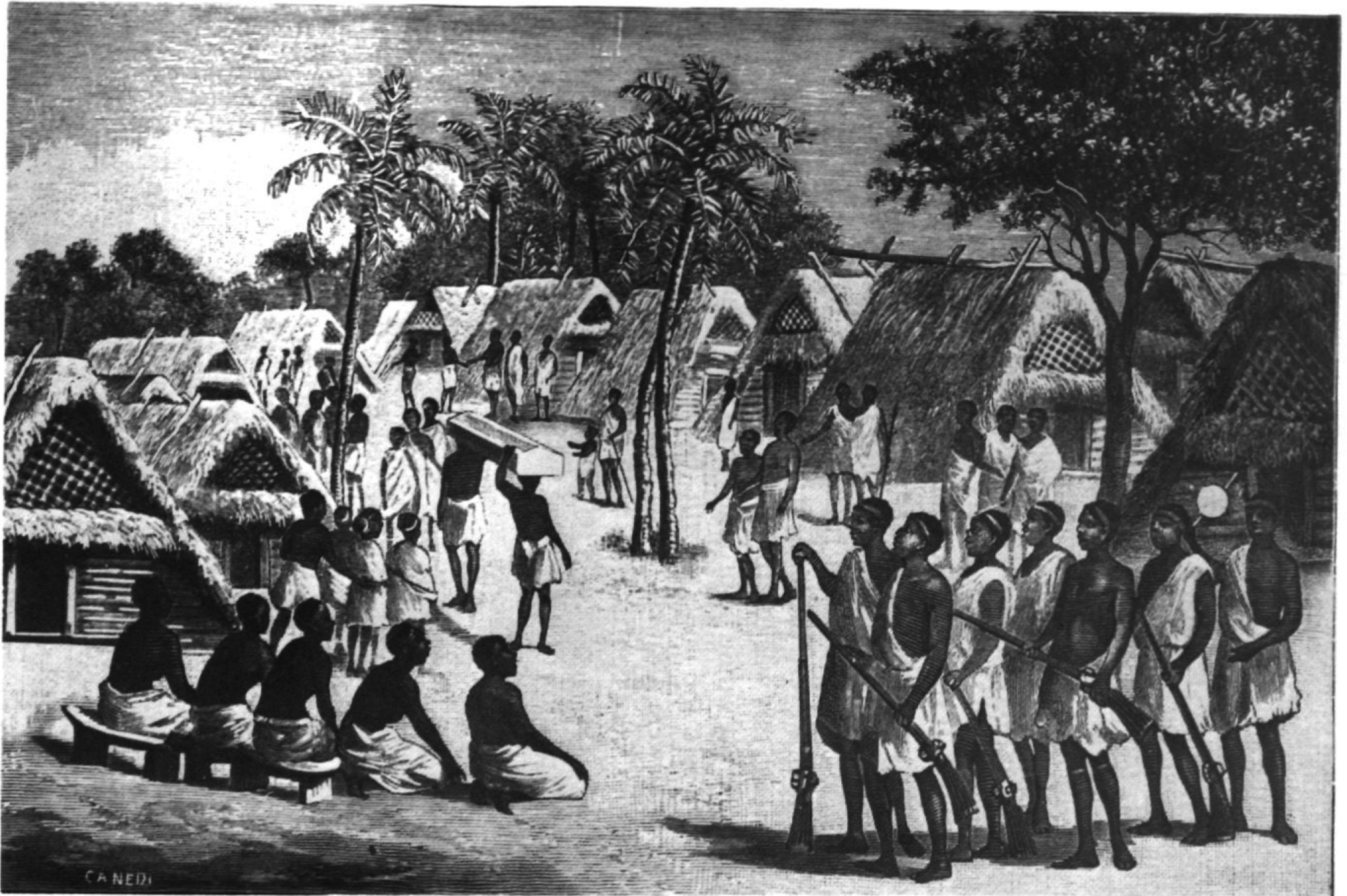


Fig. 5. The 'carrying of the corpse' in a Tapanahoni village. From: Brunetti (1890).



The second *obia* of tribal significance was *Gaan Tata* or *Gwangwella*. At the end of the nineteenth century it had come to be considered as the most prominent of the war *obia* (*feti obia* or *piiti busi obia*); a secret weapon that had split the bush open for the Djuka warriors as the Red Sea had been opened for the people of Israel. The *obia* had advised the ancestors on military tractics during war days and had shown them the way to the Tapanahoni. After the peace treaty (1760), the elders of the Oto clan decided to bury it at Santi Goon, a sanctuary in the bush opposite the village of Poeketi, and close to the site where the corpses of witches were abandoned. The *obia* was believed to be too powerful to be employed under peacetime conditions, but the real reason may have been the growing friction between the two lineages that form the Oto clan: the Red and the Black lineage. The Red lineage was apprehensive of domination by the Black one and therefore demanded that the *obia* be dismantled. The compromise that was finally reached included its burial and a compensation for the owners, the Black lineage. Some objects holding the diluted power of *Gaan Tata* such as materials adequate for the diagnosis and treatment of sickness were to be placed at the disposal of the elders of the Black lineage. The diluted or 'derived' *obia* was called the Big Calabash (*Gaan Kabassi*) after the calabash in which these sacred objects were stored.

The *Gaan Tata*, as he manifested himself in the Big Calabash, functioned as an oracle. The priest or priestess in charge could consult it in various ways. After a ritual bath had been made with herbs associated with the godhead, the officiating priest would wash his hands in it. Then, for a short period, one could ask the priest questions. The movements of his hands would indicate the answers. Or, with a somewhat different technique, the Big Calabash was held in the hands of the priest; as soon as his hands began shaking the *Gaan Tata obia* was active and questions could be asked. This tactile consultation of the *obia* is indicated by reference to it as a 'feel feel *obia*' or divination *obia* (*fii fii obia*).

Control of this *obia* was firmly in the hands of Sakka. Other elders might assist him, but always at his instructions. Sakka's



foster mother, Ma Djemba, an Oto woman who had been high priestess of the *Gaan Tata* cult for most of the second part of the 19th century, had trained him in the sacred lore and ritual of *Gaan Tata*. She had died before 1890, when the events which I will soon relate, began to unfold.

Finally, there was a third *obia* that was part of the ritual complex Sakka inherited. Formerly, the Djuka had been afflicted with a high incidence of infant mortality. Paanga Booko, a member of the Misidjan clan who happened to be married to Ma Djemba, Sakka's foster mother, decided to save the Djuka people from extinction. In one version, he travelled to the plantations where he bought the *obia* from the slaves; in another, he was already in the possession of the *obia* but rendered the Djuka a service by placing it at their collective disposal. The results were astounding. The *Agumaga obia*, as it was called, successfully combatted infant mortality. In gratitude,



Fig. 6. The 'carry oracle' of *Gaan Gadu* at Dritabiki in 1907. From: De Goeje (1908).



the great council of 'the twelve clans of Djuka' (*den twalafu*) — another name for the Djuka nation — resolved that Paanga Booko was to be richly rewarded. In the future, he would share in the bounty of the *Sweli* priests by receiving part of the legacies of those killed by the *Sweli* ordeal. This was not, informants are quick to add, on a par with the enormous volume of goods that flowed to the hieratic establishment in the 20th century, but yet it was regarded a handsome present (*wan kadoo*).

Ma Djemba became jealous of her husband's prosperity. By devious means, she tried to seduce the *obia* to reveal its secrets to her. She was not successful. However, Ma Djemba was quick to avail herself of another opportunity when it presented itself. Paanga Booko, who was in the habit of talking in his sleep, began to divulge information about the contested *obia* in this involuntary way. Ma Djemba carefully memorized everything she heard about the taboos connected with the *obia*, about its preferences and about its operating procedures. When she was through learning, she informed her husband. He was furious. The quarrel grew until Paanga Booko had recourse to a drastic measure to settle it; they would take a blood oath together. This was not to be *Sweli*, the tribal one, but something more ordinary and yet dangerous. Paanga Booko and Djemba died on the same day they took the oath, killed by the gods because they had acted irresponsibly and courted danger. Their bodies were left at Santi Goon. However, before her death Djemba had already intimated the secrets to her foster child, Sakka.

Among the descendants of Sakka a more friendly version of the *obia*'s transference is current. In his old age, Paanga Booko felt neglected by his relatives and, with the exception of his wife and Sakka, no one seemed to care for him. When Paanga Booko was dying, Djemba advised Sakka to beg the old men to pass the *obia* and its secrets on to him. This Sakka proceeded to do and that is why the *Agumaga obia* became his. In brief, by the end of the nineteenth century Sakka had gained control over two *obia* (*Gaan Tata* and *Agumaga*) and had secured an important position among the *Sweli* priests.



*The return of Oseisie*

In 1882 the paramount chief Blijmoffo died. After the burial rites had been properly executed, the Great Council (*gaan kuutu*) convened. It was composed of all village headmen and also of prominent elders of the Oto clan, the clan of the deceased. Its task was to choose a successor from among the male adults in the Black lineage of the Oto clan. Sakka was an obvious candidate for succession to this high office, but he was passed over in favour of his younger nephew Oseisie. This might have been expected. The Great Council usually attempted to divide the offices of high priest of the *Gaan Tata* cult and that of paramount chief (*gaanman*) over two persons. Other villages stood to gain from a division of powers at Drita-biki. A combination of power assets in the hands of one person, on the other hand, could jeopardize the autonomy of villages and the democratic relationships within their councils.

A delegation was sent to the Cottica river where Oseisie had settled with a few relatives in a lumber camp. Oseisie refused, protesting that he was too young and not fit to accept such a high office; why not ask others? Perhaps this also had been expected, as the successor to an office should drag his feet, showing respect for his predecessor and humility to all and sundry (Köbben 1967: 28). But Oseisie seemed to overdo it; during 1883 two delegations were sent on their long trip to the Cottica and he still refused to accept the office. Moreover, he was hiding behind pragmatic reasons for not being able to return: there were not enough boats sent to carry him, his relatives and their belongings, or he would insist he had to square off logs before they could be sold to Paramaribo. These apologies were interpreted by everyone as signs of apprehension for his rival on the Tapanahoni river, and this message settled the leadership of the third expedition.

Today it is still remembered among his relatives that Sakka took every precaution to make this third expedition, now under his leadership, a success. A great number of boats was brought together so that Oseisie's whole following could be transported in one trip to the Tapanahoni. They allowed



Oseisie, accompanied by Sakka, to go shopping in Paramaribo, and they provided him with assistants to help him finish the squaring of logs, and to guard him as well so that Oseisie would not be able to withdraw from the honorific occasion. Oseisie's disappearance would entail 'loss of face' for Sakka; people would accuse him of not really wanting the expedition to succeed so that he could usurp the position for himself. Moreover, an eventual fourth expedition under the leadership of another notable would definitely be successful. Sakka had no choice but to bring Oseisie back to the Tapanahoni. In any case Sakka was confident that the controller of the *obia* would be the de facto leader of the Djuka people. After completing their shopping the two men returned to the Tapanahoni early in 1884. Oseisie had to wait until 1888 before he could finally be inaugurated by the Dutch colonial administration. Brunetti (1890: 235-239), who met with Oseisie in Poeketi in 1886 was impressed by the role Oseisie's uncle played. Brunetti was convinced that Sakka,<sup>11</sup> 'an intelligent and crafty man', had great influence over Oseisie. These observations tally with the accounts that Van Lier and Morssink give of the early years of Oseisie's chieftainship. Beginning with the following section, 'The Death of Coba', this paper will chiefly look to oral sources for an answer to the questions concerning the first days of the *Gaan Gadu* cult. It will be based on eye-witness accounts of a generation that lived through these turbulent days, and then passed their experience on to their children. These children are now old men and women.<sup>12</sup>

### *The death of Coba*

Sa (sister) Coba, a young woman of the Red lineage of the Oto clan, died at Poeketi in 1889 or 1890.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the fact that she had never given birth to children, nothing is remembered about her today. As was the case with every adult who died, her ghost had to be subjected to an interrogation to learn the causes of her death and to obtain information on any supernatural danger the ghost might know about. The core of



this inquest was the ancient West African tradition of 'carrying the corpse' (Rattray 1927: 167-174), a ritual maintained by Surinam's Bush Negroes. Among the Tapanahoni Djuka, the inquest was obligatory for every deceased adult until a new prophetic movement abolished it as a corrupt practice in 1972 (Thoden van Velzen & van Wetering 1975).

Before returning to the interrogation of Sa Coba's ghost, we need to discuss this 'carrying of the corpse' and the association of gravediggers who performed this ritual.

The corpse was tied to a litter and carried on the heads of two bearers through the village. The ghost communicated through the bearers' movements. A forward move signified an affirmative, a backward or sideways one usually meant a negative answer. Wild, chaotic movements of the litter revealed the ghost's discomfort and embarrassment at a certain line of questioning. The interrogation of the deceased's ghost took place at some distance from the gathering in the centre of the village. The ritual was mainly conducted by the association of gravediggers who would usually invite one or more village headmen and several elders from the lineage of the deceased to participate in the questioning and also in the drawing up of a communiqué for the bereaved and the Djuka nation.

About the gravediggers. During adolescence Djuka men had to make a choice between two associations: they could either join the gravediggers (*oloman*) or become a coffin-maker (*kisiman*). The task of the last association was limited to what the name suggests. The coffin-makers had no work to do if the deceased was found out to be a witch as these nefarious persons were not entitled to a coffin; as indicated above their corpses were left unburied at reserved spots in the jungle. Thus, the coffin-makers convened only after the inquest had proved the deceased to have been a respectable person. While making a coffin, gravediggers and coffin-makers indulged in horseplay at each other's expense and in sham attacks; moreover, they attempted to get as large as possible a share from the communal meal at the end of a day's work.

The gravediggers had many more responsibilities. They attended to the interment of the deceased and took charge of the rites for the dead. From their ranks, they selected the bearers of the corpse and the interrogators of the ghost. Following a death gravediggers, from the village where it occurred as well as neighbouring villages, gathered. Even gravediggers from faraway places who happened to be visiting or passing through were expected to participate and they would do so on an equal footing. Ritual started within a couple of hours after a demise. Usually, there would be two phases of carrying the corpse. Relatives of the deceased were invited to share in the tasks of carrying and interrogating. In this way, later charges of fraud were preempted by letting the relatives share in the responsibility of the verdict.

On the surface, relationships within the association of gravediggers seemed strongly egalitarian. A closer inspection revealed that some members held key positions. These leaders, or bosses (*basi*) as they were called, assisted by a few elders selected from the relatives of the deceased, formed the committee that supervised the inquest. This same group was also responsible for the decisive communiqué issued after the carrying of the corpse.



Although nothing foreshadowed the dramatic occurrences of the months following Coba's death, from the very first day something seemed to go awry. Two hours after her death, while gravediggers and headmen from neighbouring village were arriving, the corpse was wrapped in a cloth and tied to a makeshift litter. It was lifted and placed on the heads of the bearers. They stood motionless while a libation was made to the ancestors soliciting help. The first question was posed to Coba's ghost. 'The chief (*gaanman*) was missing some of his subjects; would the deceased help him find these persons?' At the request of the gravediggers, some villagers were now playing the traditional game of hide-and-seek and secreted themselves in a deserted house. After some inconclusive movements, the ghost replied that it deeply regretted not being in a position to comply, not even to the wishes of the chief. This was generally interpreted as an admission on the deceased's part that she had perpetrated crimes of witchcraft.

A second team of bearers was called upon. A verdict of witchcraft was the strongest condemnation possible; it would be a stain on the blazon of the relatives and such a verdict could only be given after some form of endorsement from the relatives had been secured. Although this is not recalled today, it is highly likely that at least one relative of the deceased had acted as a bearer. The second team did not waste time; it headed straight for the boat landing where it was stopped by the gravediggers. Now, the verdict could no longer be postponed. The ghost of the deceased had almost forced the bearers into the river, a definite and clear answer to the questions of gravediggers and elders. Decidedly, the deceased was ashamed to stay even one minute longer in the village. She felt she had no right to remain among the respectable people she had sought to hurt.

Although most people present properly understood what had happened, the burial committee of elders and gravediggers did not issue an immediate communiqué, but instead sent a message to chief Oseisie at Dritabiki explaining what Coba's ghost had revealed. The message of the ghost (*dede moffo*) was traditional, as was Oseisie's: 'Let things happen as the ghost of



the deceased prefers them to happen; we are washing our hands of it; it is the ghost of the deceased that has the last word'. By the time the messenger had travelled to Dritabiki and back, it was late in the afternoon and too late for the gravediggers to carry Coba to the banks of that unholy creek where the corpses of witches were discarded. It was decided to let the corpse rest for one more night at Poeketi. This, and the outcome of the inquest, were then communicated to the gathering.

This posthumous condemnation shocked the gathering at Poeketi. Nowadays, Coba is recalled as 'the first witch of the Djuka'. This is a distortion of 19th century history because there were witch trials and condemnations before 1890 and instances have been recorded of Djuka who were burnt at the stake (Hostmann 1850: 277; Freytag 1927: 12; De Groot 1977: 36, 52). Coba may have been the first one to be condemned *after* her death, but this seems equally unlikely. She is probably remembered as 'the first witch' because of the deep impression left by the interrogation and subsequent events. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Coba's death ushered in a new era, in which there were many more posthumous witch trials, accusations and condemnations.

The following stage in the interrogation of Coba's ghost began in a very routine way. On the morrow, the corpse was lifted and placed on the heads of two gravediggers for a last interrogation focusing on instruments she might have used for her malevolent work. The ghost did indicate these; everywhere bottles were dug up and strange objects removed from between the palm leaves covering the huts. This was a fairly routine occurrence until 1972 and the objects thus recovered usually were buried or hidden in these places by people as weapons of defence against the black magic of their neighbours and kinsmen. But then, shortly before the corpse would finally be carried away from the village, a new and unexpected thing happened.



*Coba reveals a conspiracy*

Instead of remaining close to the ritual centre of the village where the interrogation of a ghost takes place, the bearers broke through the circle of gravediggers, elders and relatives and ran for the bush. They were stopped at the edge of the forest by gravediggers who had hurried to intercept the bearers. There, Coba's spirit revealed that she had been only one out of an enormous coven represented in every village on the Tapanahoni. Coba's ghost added that she felt so ashamed of what she had done that she offered the Djuka people to betray all the other witches so that the coven could be liquidated. When we strip the incident of its supernatural rhetorics, what remains is a statement by the gravediggers to the Djuka saying: 'Our work has not been completed with this single disclosure; we demand a full investigation of the Djuka nation and we, gravediggers and elders at Poeketi, are the ones to conduct that investigation'. Courage was needed to adopt such a position; they were clearly deviating from established procedures by taking this bold initiative. The reputation of a gravedigger was vulnerable; on the one hand he was protected by the belief that gravediggers were mere instruments moving as the ghost of the deceased ordered them to do, while on the other people were suspicious that the bearers would attempt to distort the ghost's movements for personal gain. In this case, the bearers were running the risk to be denounced as frauds, not because their tribesmen did not share their apprehension, but rather because a high-handed course of action would arouse suspicion of political scheming.

Now that the investigations began to gather momentum, an end could not easily be put to them. A fresh team of bearers, called to replace the first one, confirmed the findings; Sa Coba promised again to reveal the conspiracy everybody had suspected to exist. Popular excitement was great and although permission for this unusual extra interrogation — never again resorted to — had to be obtained from chief Oseisie, no one doubted the outcome. This, after all, was what everybody had been waiting for.



In a special palaver at Dritabiki, Oseisie end Sakka granted permission. The seal of the latter, custodian of three important *obia*, was as essential as that of Oseisie. Whatever misgivings the two most powerful men of the Tapanahoni region might have had against this development, there was nothing they dared do to thwart it. A refusal would arouse the ire of the people. Besides, this was the second day and no one at that point could have predicted that the investigation would continue for months and leave no village untouched by its findings. So, on the second day, it was quite understandable that the palaver at Dritabiki would grant permission for a sequel to the inquest.

Poeketi, the place where this inquest was to continue, was not an ordinary village. Up till approximately 1840 it had been the residence of the Djuka chiefs. The old tribal shrines were ~~situated there and even today tribal rites cannot be completed~~ without prayers and libations at these sacred places. Moreover, Coba was a woman from the small but prestigious Oto clan which consisted of two lineages: the Black lineage resident at Dritabiki, the Red lineage located at Poeketi. Any demise of a member of the Red lineage would therefore involve notables from Dritabiki. Finally, Poeketi was strategically situated. It belonged to a cluster of villages that straddled *Opu* (upstream) and *Bilo* (downstream) territory. Although the significance of this distinction between 'upstream' and 'downstream' Djuka has often been overrated in the literature, nonetheless it sometimes played its part in conflicts. Poeketi, lying at the beginning of *Opu* territory, could recruit elders and gravediggers from both areas. All in all, the geographical position of Poeketi and its political status added to the rapid spread of the movement over the Tapanahoni valley.

Once the interrogation was resumed the importance of the inquest became clearer with every day that passed. The ad hoc committee of elders and gravediggers that supervised the interrogation of Coba's ghost on the first and second day was expanded; notables from Dritabiki and other villages joined it



and transformed it into a 'permanent commission of enquiry' (hereafter to be called the Investigation Committee). It was ordained that all adults of Poeketi, males and females, and all members of the Red lineage who had taken up residence elsewhere, had to pass under the bier that held Coba's corpse. Those who were innocent could pass freely, those who were barred passage by sudden movements of the bearers were either witches or guilty of other hostile deeds against their fellow tribesmen. The witches, and perhaps also other 'criminals', were expected to undergo a cleansing ritual for which they had to pay. People from neighbouring villages, who had come to the investigation attracted by sensational revelations could, 'if their heart urged them to do so,' submit to the screening as well.

While the subjection of Poeketi's inhabitants and of other 'volunteers' to the witchcraft screening was not unusual, some developments certainly were. They all occurred after Sakka had left Dritabiki to pass a few weeks in his rustic bush camp, two days paddling upstream from Dritabiki. Sakka, and other elders of Dritabiki as well, did so periodically. They enjoyed staying for a while in the quiet and secure ambiance of their bush camps, with only the 'children' (dependents) around and with fish and game more plentiful than around Dritabiki which was part of a cluster of about ten villages (*Lon Watta*). As far as can be reconstructed today, it was no political manoeuvre on Sakka's part to withdraw for a few weeks to his bush camp. All the accounts stress that Sakka, once he understood what was going on at Poeketi in his absence, felt that the Investigation Committee had deliberately sprung an unpleasant surprise on him.

After Sakka left for his bush camp, the following drastic developments occurred. First, the witchcraft screening was made obligatory for all Djuka of the Tapanahoni valley, from Poligoedoe at its mouth up to the farthest bush camp on the upper reaches of the river. All had to pass under the bier in order that Coba's ghost might indicate her former accomplices. That this ordeal had become obligatory meant that permission of chief Oseisie had been secured. With



hundreds of Djuka now streaming into Poeketi and with new denouncements of witches everyday, the whole of the Tapanahoni was in turmoil. Secondly, as the weeks passed by, the supernatural process was redefined. The decomposing body did not harbour only Coba's ghost: it had also become an instrument in the hands of *Sweli*, who had 'mounted' Coba (*Sweli subi Sa Coba*).<sup>14</sup> Such a 'definition of the situation' could only mean that Sakka's colleagues of the *Sweli* cult considered the enquiry at Poeketi as a legitimate search for witches from which they could no longer stand aloof. Finally, the witches discovered by the interrogation were ritually cleansed and then restored as honourable citizens to the nation by yet another ritual. Who the priests were who performed these rites is not known to my informants; yet, it seems likely that these were the *Sweli* priests, the only ones who had an anti-witchcraft 'apparatus' at their command.

Obligatory screening of all Djuka, cleansing rites and fines for those who were found out as witches — this clearly was an anti-witchcraft movement. It soon began to branch out in other directions as well. After weeks of interrogations, the Investigation Committee decreed that Sa Coba's ghost with the assistance of *Sweli*, would remove most spirits that possessed humans. It was felt that too much harm had already been done by mediums employing such spirits for their own, selfish purposes, often endangering the health of their kith and kin. This, it was announced, would have to come to an end. All spirit mediums and all custodians of spirit shrines would have to subject themselves to the judgement of Coba *cum Sweli*.

After the massive screening of witches, this was the most drastic step taken. A medium considered his spirit as property, something which had been dearly paid for in time and money. An exorcism would mean the undoing of years of instruction and a great financial loss. It also implied giving up any hope of influencing village affairs in the future through mediumship. For the custodian of a spirit shrine, even bigger losses were involved; no more supplicants or apprentices paying fees, no more influence through control of divination.

In less than two months, hundreds of mediums were



deprived of their spirits. All supernatural beings who were potentially harmful, or were believed to be indifferent to the human lot, were immediately exorcised. The sole exception was the group of mediums with *Kumanti* spirits — the most benign of all supernatural beings after *Gaan Tata* and *Sweli*. The general effect was, as one informant recalled his mother describing the consequences: 'a complete nocturnal silence, only the river was heard at night, everything else was so quiet! The barking and howling of mediums in their nightly trances had disappeared from the village scene. It was an uncanny, eerie silence. But five, perhaps seven years later, the spirits were all back.'<sup>15</sup>

Ma Amalesi of Dritabiki is a case in point. She was ordered to appear before Coba's oracle at Poeketi. After she had passed under Coba's corpse the Investigation Committee concluded, from the movements of the bier, that she was not a witch but yet a threat to the body social as she was the medium of a bush spirit (*Ampuku*). A bush spirit has very little regard for the welfare of human beings and is well-nigh impossible to control by his medium. Hence, it was dangerous and it had to be exorcised. Ma Amalesi handed over all cult objects to the Committee. These, together with the sacred objects of dozens of other mediums, were burnt in fire. The spirit was exorcised with a simple ablution. A generation later, after Amalesi's death, her bush spirit took possession of Foida, her sister's daughter.

Rumour about these developments reached the missionaries in the coastal area. It gave them heart and they cheered the news that spirit shrines were burnt down or thrown into the river. However, they overestimated the iconoclastic drive in the movement; this was not an attempt to purify Bush Negro religion of lesser supernatural beings and leave only the High Gods *Sweli* and *Gaan Tata*. Kersten (1896: 185) who visited Dritabiki in 1895, was astounded when he saw spirit shrines and cult objects abounding. He asked chief Oseisie for clarification and received the reply: 'We have only done away with the really evil spirits; all the good ones we kept'. The missionaries turned sour on the *Gaan Gadu* movement when their hopes of a total destruction of 'idolatry' were frustrated. Nevertheless, the events at Poeketi were impressive by any standard; it was the most extensive iconoclastic and witchcraft-eradication movement that ever swept through the interior.



*The power behind Coba's ghost*

Poeketi in these days was the scene of a continuing carnival; hundreds of Djuka from all villages of the Tapanahoni were present everyday. Clad in their finest clothes, eager not to miss anything of the scandals unearthed and the excitement and sensation that every new day brought. Who was running this show, who was responsible for a run-of-the-mill inquest transformed into a witchcraft-eradication movement with strong iconoclastic overtones?

The obvious choice for consideration would be the gravediggers. They, after all, took the initiative. Were they more than a catalyst? It is doubtful. As usual, the gravediggers were nothing more than an *ad hoc* collection of individuals brought together from Poeketi and neighbouring villages to assume responsibility for this particular burial and the connected rites. Had the death occurred a month later, the composition of the group would have been different. The gravediggers did not form — it cannot be stressed enough — a corporate group with shared interests. They came from different villages and they were not expected to represent their local interests: 'Gravediggers have no village' (*oloman n'áá konde*) it was said. While this did not mean that they would not on occasion further the cause of their village, the ideology did work as a formidable check against any open attempt to promote the interests of their own group.

It is equally unlikely to look to the Investigation Committee as the body responsible for the happenings. This Committee was composed of gravediggers who held ranks of prestige (*basi*) in the association and notables from among the relatives and neighbouring villages. Analogous to the gravediggers, they were not supposed to speak for a lineage or even a village as their duty was to represent the Djuka nation and remain aloof from local squabbles and interests. Once the process was under way, they certainly must have attempted to give some guidance to it — the increase in size of the Committee with Sweli priests attests to that. Still, the primary force did not come from their ranks. All the evidence indicates that they



were just as surprised as anybody else was by the turn developments took.

To look for the cause in deliberate manoeuvring by political or religious leaders does not make sense either. First, Sakka played no role whatsoever in the starting of the massive screening of the Tapanahoni Djuka; he merely resigned himself to the unusual expansion of the inquest. Secondly, Sakka was far away in his upstream bush camp when the witch craze really got under way. There is no doubt that his followers apprised him of the events at Poeketi; he probably was not in favour of it and hoped that it would just blow over. On the basis of what several informants told me — the testimony of his followers is particularly valuable — it appears that Sakka lost control of the situation. I will return to this later.

Another possibility could be the chief, Oseisie. Perhaps Oseisie set all this up to counter the great influence of his uncle Sakka on religious affairs. However appealing this supposition might be at first glance, there is little to substantiate it and much to refute it. Certainly, Oseisie had a motive in his dislike for the old caucus of religious bosses headed by Sakka. However, he did have neither the means nor the dedicated following to organise the happenings at Poeketi or enforce its decisions. Moreover, when an opportunity presented itself to get some grip on the Investigation Committee, he quickly sided with Sakka.

When queried about the persons who were in charge at Poeketi, informants were not very helpful. Although several sections of this account were related to me in great detail, they could not name the gravediggers who relayed the original message of the conspiracy Coba's ghost revealed. I now feel that it is useless to ask for the names of leaders or power groups in a search for explanation. The Coba enquiries and the happenings that surrounded it were borne by a mass movement, from its inception in the first two days after Coba's death until its sudden end three months later. Some of the evidence germane to this point will now be presented.

First and foremost, it was a movement widely supported by



influential elders and gravediggers. Several teams of bearers had carried the corpse of Coba, meaning that support for the developments was widespread among the association of gravediggers which represents a fairly large section of the adult male population. The composition of the Investigation Committee itself guaranteed that many influential elders connived at it and perhaps even encouraged it. Later, when the screening test became obligatory, the cooperation of elders in all Tapanahoni villages was secured. In view of the prevailing system of village democracy, this by implication signified that a considerable portion of the adult male population looked with favour on the Poeketi enquiries.

The swift development of the enquiries, the absence of a prophet or any form of leadership, the cooperation of great numbers of elders and gravediggers, all indicate that this was a popular upsurge, a mass movement. But, as with every mass movement, some supported it more strongly than others. It is my contention that the backing for the enquiries came primarily from that section of the adult male population which had, during the preceding decade, become transport carriers for the gold industry of Surinam and French Guiana.

During the 1880s, three successive gold rushes brought thousands of treasure hunters to the Lawa-Maroni basin of which the Tapanahoni forms part (Spalburg 1899: 8). The Bush Negroes who transported the gold-diggers and brought them the food and equipment they needed became rich quickly. They dreaded the witches more than anything on earth; they possessed wealth undreamed of before and feared that envious kinsmen and neighbours — less fortunate — were willing to go to any length to get a share of it.

What the Poeketi enquiries did for the boatmen was to externalise these fears. It was no longer an individual emotion gnawing at one's sense of security in the world: obviously, it was shared by hundreds of others. With every day's share of startling new disclosures, their fears increasingly appeared legitimate. Once anxieties were brought into the open, and the enemies had assumed concrete shape, they could be fought and properly dealt with through humiliation, fines and cleansing



ritual. This is why Poeketi was so significant for the boatmen, economically the strongest group in Djuka society.

*Sakka strikes back*

As the investigation at Poeketi gained momentum, with hundreds of people journeying to the Coba oracle, Sakka was reposing at his bush camp 'Bilo Watta', not far from present-day Granbori. A message arrived which left Sakka thunderstruck: he was ordered to appear before the Coba oracle with all his children and dependents. Sakka, who had felt secure as the religious authority *par excellence*, was to submit himself to the judgement of the ghost of a witch and to his own *Sweli obia*! That, it must have been clear to Sakka, meant that the Investigation Committee felt strong enough to challenge him. Sakka had allowed control of the *Sweli obia* to slip from his hands; he had grievously underestimated the appeal of the Poeketi enquiries and the forces behind it. What was worse, he had allowed a new oracle to merge that was beyond his sphere of influence. For the first time in Djuka history, there was now a direct possibility to consult *Sweli* on witchcraft and other matters of interest, regularly and in public. Hitherto, a 'carry oracle' of tribal stature<sup>16</sup> had not been available. Now the bier with the decaying remains of Coba served as one. And, in the meantime, Sakka had gone fishing!

Sakka decided to redress the situation by regaining the initiative. He assembled all his dependents, as he was told to do, but travelled to Dritabiki, not Poeketi. It was a traumatic journey, which today is still engraved in the memory of descendants of Sakka as the hour of trial. In painful detail, grandchildren of Sakka recall the account he related to them, at which boat landings they stopped on their downstream journey, to whom they spoke, how they all had withdrawn from him. 'Father Sakka, no exception can be made for you, you have to appear before the Coba oracle, you and all your children'; said Da Nono at the Godo Olo landing. But Sakka was adamant and furiously rejected any notion that he or his



dependents could be forced to undergo the witchcraft test: 'My children will not pass under the body of that dead woman that should have been thrown away three months ago; my children will not tolerate the gravediggers to carry the corpse around them! I have my own *obia* to work with.' This is what he told the elders at Godo Olo and at countless bush camps and other villages he passed, and this is what he threw in the face of Oseisie when the latter urged him to give in.

A few days after his arrival at Dritabiki, Sakka's preparations were completed. The only way to get the upper hand, he must have realized, was to offer the Djuka another 'carry oracle', but responsive to a more powerful *obia*, that would fulfill the same needs that the Coba oracle did. *Sweli* was not a good proposition; he had lost control over it. The *Agumaga* and *Gaan Tata obia* were too weak to help Sakka regain ascendancy; people were familiar with their ordinary powers and these clearly had not been enough. However, buried at Santi Goon was the great *obia* of the war of independence, the undiluted *Gaan Tata* or *Gwangwella obia*. Sakka concluded that the pure *obia* had to be disinterred.

Two problems had to be solved before Sakka could hope to have access to this powerful *obia*. First, there was the religious and technical problem of how to 'enrich' the diluted *Gaan Tata obia* until its strength was equal to the original one buried at Santi Goon. Additionally, the *obia* should be made available so that it could be employed as a carry oracle. The second task was to convince people of the authenticity and strength of the new oracle, no mean feat in view of the enormous popularity of the Coba oracle and the cooperation that the Investigation Committee had secured from Oseisie and other influential elders. Oseisie was informed by Sakka about his audacious project but he counselled against it: 'What is buried remains buried; the *obia* has caused too much strife in the past' (Morssink 1934). Oseisie kept insisting that Sakka submit himself to the Coba *cum Sweli* oracle.

Sakka got into his boat early one morning and headed for Santi Goon. He was accompanied by a few trusted followers, two of them his sister's children. To solve the first problem



adequately, Sakka needed tools for the task. For this purpose, he had selected a relatively unknown *Kumanti* carry oracle. This was convenient since, primarily, it was owned by his matrilineal kin and secondly, because the *Kumanti* gods had come out of the grand investigation at Poeketi unscathed. At an open place in the forest at Santi Goon, the antechamber for the uninitiated, he ordered his followers to wait. He then walked over to the holy place, dug-up some objects connected with the *Gaan Tata* cult and returned to the antechamber. Now the *Kumanti* bundle, repository of the *obia*, was fastened to a plank and put on the heads of two bearers. Divination could begin. Its main purpose was to legitimize the undertaking and obtain directions from the *Kumanti* spirit on how to construct a new *Gaan Tata* or *Gaan Gadu* bundle. At the end of the day, Sakka and his small band of followers returned to Dritabiki with two *obia*: the *Kumanti* and the *Gaan Gadu obia* in a new and enriched form.

Now came his most difficult task, to persuade the Djuka, in the midst of euphoria, that they were wrong. With conviction, cunning and deceit, he succeeded remarkably. As one of his grandchildren related it:

After he had come back from Santi Goon, late one evening, Sakka went to the boat landing of Dritabiki, you know the muddy one. He carried a bottle of beer which he then hid by tying it to the underside of a boat. On the morrow, at the break of day, father Sakka walked over to Oseisie's house and said: 'Brother See (a diminutive), things happened to me yesterday, you wouldn't believe it, somebody pinched a bottle of beer of mine.' Oseisie replied: 'Well, that's your problem, uncle, look for the thief among your own children.' But father Sakka insisted that they would look into the matter jointly: 'I am sure that none of my children did it. But fortunately, I have a way of knowing now; I possess an *obia* that can decide for us. Let us carry this *obia* of mine and see what it says.'

The two men then took the paddle to which father Sakka had fastened a small bundle containing the *obia*. Oseisie placed the front side of the paddle on his head, father Sakka carried the back end of the paddle. (N.B. Oseisie had been given the most important position, the front bearer carries more responsibility than the hind one.) In this way, the two men had become the first bearers of *Gaan Gadu*.

The two men explained to the *obia* what had happened: 'a beer bottle had been lost, show us, *obia* where is it?' What the two men were really doing was to test the *obia* (*den puubee a obia luku*). Now came the first question: 'Did people from another village steal the beer bottle?' The *obia*, in reply, forced its bearers to move in circles. This was interpreted to mean that the one who took it away was from the same village. They then politely begged the *obia* to help them recover the bottle. The *obia* agreed to



assist them. First, the *obia* pushed them into the river, straight to the same muddy landing. Upon arrival Oseisie asked: 'Where do you bring us. Where is the bottle? In one of the boats?' The *obia* moved its bearers sideways; a negative reply. — 'In the water then?' *Obia*: 'Yes'. — 'Under this boat?' *Obia*: 'Yes'. And they found the beer bottle.

Father Sakka was enraptured that the *obia* worked so well and Oseisie was equally impressed. However, the *obia* was dissatisfied. *Obia*: 'Now, let me speak. You two men appear to have tested me, as if you had no faith in me whatsoever. You will have to pay me for this lack of trust'.

Then, the *obia* pronounced that Oseisie had to pay twelve *pangi* (a cloth used by women as a wrap-around skirt, but also a traditional form of payment for fees and fines) and one wicker bottle with rum. Which accounts for why today witches have to pay, after treatment, the same amount and in these commodities. Father Sakka, however, had to pay much more. The *obia* reprimanded him for displaying so little trust when he should have known better: 30 *pangi* and six wicker bottles with rum, that is what our father Sakka had to pay!

Now, the *obia* was ready to be shown to all people (*fu tjai en a ganda*). The following day, all the people of *Lon Watta* (area around Dritabiki, see fig. 2) had a chance to see for themselves what a wonderful carry oracle they had received. The questions to *Gaan Gadu* were put by father Sakka and Oseisie; a son of Oseisie and a son of Sakka's sister were the first regular bearers. And so we got our *Gaan Gadu*.<sup>17</sup>

When the first reactions of the people proved to be favourable, great council meetings were proclaimed for all Djuka of the Tapanahoni. For three days a great council (*gaan kuutu*) convened at Poeketi and for eight days at Dritabiki; both occasions were presided over jointly by Sakka and Oseisie dressed in the official uniform of the colonial administration.

One of the first decisions of the great council was to bury whatever remained of Coba. This was to be done in a shallow grave; a compromise between the burial of a witch whose corpse is left at an unholy spot in the jungle and the ordinary burial. Respect for *Sweli*, who had used the deceased so long as his vehicle, made the great council decide on this compromise.

More significantly, it was resolved by the great council that all decisions of the Coba oracle were to be honoured. The destruction of evil objects, the spirits that were removed, all these were applauded as great improvements in the quality of life. 'It lifted a weight from our chest to know that all these bad spirits were no longer around,' one informant recalled his mother telling him.



For the pattern of future power relations, the mergers that Sakka executed were crucial. First, he managed to fuse the *Agumaga* and *Gaan Tata obia*. How he did this is unknown today, but politically speaking it was relatively easy as he firmly controlled both *obia*. The merger with *Sweli* must have been much more difficult. First, he had *Sweli's* vehicle, the body of *Coba*, buried. With the help of *Oseisie* and a few relatives, all of them *Sweli* priests, Sakka made his second move: *Sweli* was offered hospitality in the bundle of *Gaan Tata*. This probably was acceptable to the majority of *Coba's* supporters, as what they desired most was a 'religious machine' that would consolidate the gains of the past few months and give assurance of constant vigilance for the future.

Sakka, supported by *Oseisie* when events were developing favourably, had in one stunning blow reversed fortunes and was in command again. The *Coba* oracle was removed. The merger with *Sweli* guaranteed that no one could turn that cult as a weapon against him. While formerly he had been *primus inter pares* of the *Sweli* cult, after the merger his position was unassailable. The considerable prestige and legitimacy of the *Sweli* cult now came to reinforce the *Gaan Tata* or *Gaan Gadu* cult. The merger was so successful that the initiates called the combination of the three *obia Agumaga* — after the *obia* that had indisputably been Sakka's.

But it was no longer 'business as usual'. *Poeketi*, the Investigation Committee and its numerous followers had all surrendered to Sakka, but only after a price had been exacted; the radical reorientation of the tribal cults. What the 'speech-making community' of affluent boatmen demanded was a much more active priesthood, dedicated to the goal of eradicating witchcraft. The search for the 'enemies within the gates', as Mayer (1970: 62) once aptly called the witches in an African society, was to be the main preoccupation of gods and priests. From this point on total war would be waged on them. The boatmen were willing to pay handsome fees to Sakka and his colleagues, but they demanded protection of their lives, prosperity and reputation in return. It should be made clear at the new oracles that they, the boatmen, were vindicated as



hard-working citizens of the Djuka nation who could walk upright. The new *Gaan Gadu* cult took over *in toto* the reforms that Coba's oracle and the Investigation Committee had promulgated. He who pays the piper, calls the tune.

#### *Characteristics of the Gaan Gadu cult*

In 1890, after years of steadily growing fears of witchcraft, the new *Gaan Tata*, *Agumaga* or *Gaan Gadu* was called upon to safeguard his people. After the successful merger with the *Sweli obia*, the Djuka but also the faithful from other tribes, had to enter into a covenant with Him by drinking the sacred potion (*diingi Sweli* or *diingi Gadu*). In this new form it remained the religion's main sacrament and ordeal; those who survived proved themselves worthy of God's protection, those who died were the witches. Two important differences with the past come to light here. Whereas formerly, during most of the 19th century, representatives of villages could take the oath or a few suspects who were called to make an appearance, now it was binding on every adult. Equally important, the rites were no longer defined predominantly as an oath of allegiance to the Djuka tribe. Supplicants from other tribes were also given the opportunity to drink the potion. One's first loyalty was to be to *Gaan Gadu* rather than to a particular tribe. The institution of oath taking was ancient, but its redefinition was radical. It reflected both the rising fears of witchcraft as well as the fact that Djuka, Saramaka, Aluku and Paramaka were now living and working in the same river basins of Surinam and French Guiana, sharing bush camps for a night stop and assisting each other in passing the rapids.

The new cult brought a view of man's destiny and of the character of their supreme deity that was astoundingly novel and unfamiliar to the Bush Negroes. Whereas formerly man's success and peace of mind hinged on a proper compromise between the claims of diverse supernatural agencies, now devotion could be primarily reserved for *Gaan Gadu*. This God not only scrutinized their deeds, as did the supernatural



beings of a traditional cosmology, but followed their thinking and feeling as well. *Gaan Gadu* was the deity 'that looked down into their hearts' and from whom no evil thoughts could be hidden. This was a most revolutionary notion and moreover, pertinent to the first task of the new movement — to smell out the witches.

Barring a few exceptional cases, witches were not believed to be driven by an inherited constitution which would predispose them for such heinous crimes (Van Wetering 1973: 84). It was rather a state of mind that would prompt men to harm the interests of his relatives and neighbours. Each misdeed would pave the way for a graver one; the propensity to commit witchcraft grew like cancer in the body, feeding on it and ultimately destroying it. It was a process of gradual moral corruption that often took years to reach its climax in the person of a witch fully determined to destroy life and well equipped to do so. But along the road to this final station there were places where the individual could resist temptations and turn back. Hence, a corollary of the theological notion of the omniscient God was the probing of conscience by the faithful. One could search one's heart for feelings of envy, hatred and resentment, for a grudge harboured too long. The notion of guilt was not foreign to Bush Negro religious life, but the way it came to predominate other feelings certainly was. The emphasis on the individual who could only at great pains and with perpetual inner scrutiny keep to the narrow road, was equally novel. Transgression of the commandment 'Thou shall not commit witchcraft' would entail a witch's death; the most dishonourable death for a Djuka (*wisi dede*). As in the past, the corpse of the deceased would be cast away in the jungle, the estate confiscated and a considerable part dumped at a sacred spot next to the *Gaan Gadu* bush shrine at Santi Goon.

Other moral injunctions were enforced by *Gaan Gadu* as well. These included suicide attempts, physical aggression, adultery, homosexuality and the transgression of the taboo on menstrual seclusion. These were punished by *Gaan Gadu* with illness and in serious cases with death. A demise for such reasons would be classified as a 'sinner's death' (*misi dede*). This



was a novel category as formerly one could either die as a witch or as a respectable person (*jooka dede*). A deity taking such an interest in all spheres of life was unusual, and the same can be said of the stern, disciplinarian image of the deity that *Gaan Gadu*'s priests assiduously cultivated. From the first years following its inception we have reports mentioning that men were flogged for hitting their wives or even for coming too late to a religious convocation. All were measures taken in the name of *Gaan Gadu*.

The confiscating of legacies and the discarding of a witch's corpse in the bush were ancient institutions that had been part of the *Sweli* cult for a very long time. What the events at Poeketi did was to intensify greatly the use that was made of these practices. Formerly, the posthumous condemnation had been exceptional; now it seemed to become the rule. Between 1961 and 1970, when the *Gaan Gadu* cult was still flourishing in the Tapanahoni region, 50% of all deceased persons were posthumously condemned as witches (Van Wetering 1973: 57). An enormous volume of confiscated goods was brought to Santi Goon.

Nowadays, the Djuka are well aware of the changes wrought at Poeketi. They summarize it by saying 'Sister Coba created Santi Goon' (*Sa Coba ben meke Santi Goon*). The gravediggers and Investigation Committee at Poeketi created an atmosphere of emergency, and neither Sakka nor anybody else would have been capable of dispelling it even if they had wished to do so, which they did not. Sakka could only give direction to the apprehensions by having the holy bundle of *Gaan Gadu* operate as the Coba oracle functioned before, a spearhead in combatting witches. Coba's death therefore marked a watershed in Djuka history and it makes sense to divide it into two periods: before and after Coba.



*Aftermath*

What happened after the founding of the *Gaan Gadu* oracle is better known. One of the first decisions made was to export the cult to other regions where Djuka had settled and to other Bush Negroes as well. This missionary drive was related to the new theological ideas, in particular to notions about the supreme deity and the universal and omnipresent character of evil. The Djuka of the Tapanahoni saw the new creed as absolutely essential for the survival of *all* Bush Negroes, not as something of only parochial or tribal significance. Such sentiments were reinforced by the obvious gain the hieratic leadership was to have from a new stream of supplicants, and from the share that they could take from the legacies of dead witches.

In 1891, several meetings were held at various places throughout the coastal area to familiarize the Bush Negroes with the new creed. In particular, people were urged to free themselves from the shackles of possessing spirits by pushing their shrines into the river and burning their amulets. That is what many proceeded to do. The complete inauguration of new branches of the cult had to wait until 1893. In that year, a delegation of Cottica elders under the leadership of their headman Brokohamaka journeyed to the Tapanahoni. After a six months' stay they returned with the carry oracle and other required cult objects. Upon his return in September 1893, Brokohamaka convened a gathering of all Cottica Djuka to disclose what divine pronouncements had been given on the Tapanahoni a few years earlier. In 1893 and 1894, Buck (MT 1895: 47-54; MT 1896: 65-79), a missionary who often visited Moarimbomoffo from the nearby mission post at Wanhatti, could observe that key institutions of the *Gaan Gadu* cult had already been introduced in the Cottica region at that early stage.

That the new cult swiftly gained acceptance in other Bush Negro regions, can be inferred from the entries in Spalburg's diary (1896-1900). At that time he noticed the presence at Dritabiki of Saramaka, Paramaka, a few Creoles from Para-



maribo and Cayenne, and many Djuka from the Cottica and Commewijne regions. All these people were attracted by the new *Gaan Gadu* oracle.

Well known and much written about is the rift that opened between the two top men of the *Gaan Gadu* movement in 1891. What exactly caused the trouble is not fully understood. As discussed above, some hold that the enormous raise in Oseisie's annual salary from the Dutch, irked Sakka (Van Lier 1919: 49). It was also contended that the trouble flared up when Oseisie began to demand a bigger share of the emoluments received by the *Gaan Gadu* priests. Nowadays, descendants of Oseisie present a view that is predictably different from that of Sakka's grandchildren. But both seem to be right when they explain: 'People with long noses cannot kiss'.

There is no doubt about the upshot of the confrontation between the two big men. Sakka took his carry oracle and, together with his relatives, founded the village of Granbori in 1891. Djuka from various villages joined him, particularly those of the *Lon Watta* section. For Dritabiki, the consequences were an unmitigated disaster: a whole quarter of the village, where the relatives and elders of Sakka had stayed, suddenly was deserted. Dritabiki, denuded of its most powerful *obia*, could attract few patients and supplicants. The Bush Negroes Spalburg met in the village were on their way to the *Gaan Gadu* oracle at Granbori; they paid their respects to chief Oseisie by spending a few days in the village. In other cases, patients were told by Sakka to wait for a call before they would move to Granbori. In this way, the once important village of Dritabiki became a mere antechamber for Granbori. Its prestige and function so declined that, between 1896 and 1900, Oseisie himself spent as much time in Sakka's village as in his own residence (Spalburg 1896-1900).<sup>18</sup> Oseisie clearly had been the loser in this encounter. From approximately 1893, Sakka's prestige was further enhanced by Ma Fiida, a healer, visionary and medium that claimed to be possessed by a spirit sent by *Gaan Gadu* himself. Countless patients flocked to Granbori to be treated by her.

Shortly after 1900, Oseisie managed to fabricate his own



*Gaan Gadu* bundle and oracle in more or less the same way as Sakka had done a decade earlier. He was assisted by defectors from Sakka's camp who accompanied the chief on his trip to Santi Goon and provided him with secret information on how the first bundle had been composed. Now there was real trouble on the Tapanahoni. Sakka threatened to stop all traffic of Oseisie supporters to the Amerindian territory closer to the Brazilian border, a favourite area for hunting and fishing and for buying hunting dogs from the Amerindians. Oseisie warned Sakka that such a drastic step would meet with instant reprisal: no inhabitant of Granbori would be allowed to pass Dritabiki on his way to the coast.

A reconciliation was finally arrived at which left Oseisie in a much better position. From then on, the parties would recognize both the Granbori and Dritabiki oracles as authentic mouthpieces of *Gaan Gadu*. A great feast of atonement took place at Dritabiki in September 1903. Thereafter, two *Gaan Gadu* oracles, one at Dritabiki and one at Granbori, were in operation. Recently, in 1972, a new religious leader<sup>19</sup> put an end to the activities of the *Gaan Gadu* oracles of the Tapanahoni river.

Acknowledgements. This paper is mainly based on field research among the Djuka of the Tapanahoni area of Surinam. It took place from June 1961 till November 1962, during August 1965, in September and October 1970, in December 1973 and January 1974 and again in April 1977. I have drawn on the field notes of Wilhelmina van Wetering, my colleague in a long-term study of Djuka society. Dr. James Park generously shared his knowledge of the Tapanahoni Djuka with me. For comments on this paper I wish to thank Chris de Beet, Miriam de Beet-Sterman, Gary Brana-Shute and especially Rosemary Brana-Shute. None of them should be held responsible for my interpretation of Djuka history.

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Adress of author: Centre of Caribbean Studies, c.o.  
Institute for Cultural Antropology, University of Utrecht.



## NOTES

1. The Bush Negroes, or Maroons, are descendants of slaves brought to Surinam from West Africa. Their ancestors escaped from the plantations, fought a successful guerilla war against the Dutch planters and their mercenaries and managed to establish semi-independent tribes in the interior. The most populous of the six Bush Negro tribes are the *Djuka* and *Saramaka*, each now numbering between 15,000 and 20,000 (Price 1976: 3). In 1900, estimates for the *Djuka* population ranged between 3,000 and 4,000. The *Djuka* have founded their villages both in the hinterland, along the Tapanahoni, Maroni and Lawa rivers, and in the coastal plain, along the Cottica, Commewijne and lower Saramacca rivers (see Fig. 1).

The geographical position of the other groups is as follows:

the *Saramaka*, in the centre of the country along the Suriname river and its tributaries; the *Matawai*, a much smaller group (population approximately 1,800) along the upper reaches of the Saramacca river;

The *Aluku* or *Boni* on the banks of the Lawa river (approximately 1,500);

the *Paramaka* along the central part of the Maroni river (population 2,000);

the *Kwinti* along the Tibiti, Coppename and Saramacca rivers (population about 300).

Figures for Saramaka are taken from Price (1976: 3); for Paramaka from Lenoir (1973: 1); for the Matawai and the Saramacca Kwinti I rely on the demographic knowledge of Chris and Miriam de Beet; for the Coppename Kwinti on Van der Elst (1975: 14), while the Aluku or Boni figures were obtained by doubling Hurault's (1960: 40-41) 1958 census count.

2. The name *Gaan Tata* has fallen into disuse. Nowadays, the *Djuka* usually refer to *Gaan Gadu* or *Bigi Gadu* (Thoden van Velzen 1966). Kersten, a missionary who visited the Tapanahoni in 1895 (MBB 1896: 195), noted that the name *Gaan Gadu* was used by the high priest Da Labi Agumasakka ('Sakka') as a synonym for *Gaan Tata*. Other names mentioned in the earliest accounts of the movement are *Massa Jehovah* and *Bakaa* (MT 1895: 52), respectively 'Sir Jehovah' and 'European' or rather 'Outsider'. I will employ the name *Gaan Gadu* for the movement that spread through Surinam in the early 1890s. As I will presently explain, the *Gaan Tata* was merely one of the constituting cults within the framework of the *Gaan Gadu* movement.

3. Spalburg (1896-1900) counted 42 Saramaka at Dritabiki between the months of July and November 1896. They were on their way to the main *Gaan Gadu* oracle, then situated at Granbori. Other entries in Spalburg's diaries also point to the presence of Saramaka for worship of *Gaan Gadu* on the Tapanahoni river (cf. May and August 1899). See also Spalburg (1899: 38).

4. Personal communication, Chris de Beet and Miriam de Beet-Sterman.

5. Leerdam referred to a much earlier phase in the history of the *Gaan Gadu* cult, probably to the early 1920s.

6. Most notably Leerdam (1957), Van Lier (1919) and Morssink (1934).

7. Both accounts predominantly use the name *Gaan Tata*, irrespective of the period discussed. Although there is nothing wrong with such usage, I prefer the name *Gaan*



*Gadu* for the movement that had so much success in the 1890s. I will have occasion to argue that the movement contained features that were radically new, and that it would be helpful to distinguish it from the *Gaan Tata* cult which must have existed for the better part of the nineteenth century.

8. Van Lier (1919: 54) mentions September 1902 as the date for the reconciliation feast and referred to the testimony of the surveyor Samson, who was an eye-witness of the scene. From Polak (1908: 244), however, we know that Samson's visit to Dritabiki occurred in September 1903.

9. Here is an entry from Morssink's manuscript: 'The older men were accustomed to an easy and comfortable life, surrounded by their many wives, but without doing any hard work!' (Now they were thinking:) 'How can we keep the younger generation in subjection? How? By rehabilitating *Gaan Tata* and so Sakka proceeded to advise them, not without Oseisie's consent'.

10. From detailed historical information kindly made available to me by Michel Aboikoni and Richard Price, it appears likely that the Saramaka villages of Kampu and Dangogo had adopted *Gaan Tata* worship before 1890. Many years later, the exact date is difficult to give, the Tapanahoni Djuka urged these Saramaka to accept a number of religious innovations from them. Most notable among these was the 'carry oracle'; a divination technique of central importance in the new *Gaan Tata* or *Gaan Gadu* movement of 1890. The 'carry oracle' was not employed by adherents of the old *Gaan Tata* cult.

Albitrouw (1892-1896) reported the upheaval by the messianic prophet Paulus Anake in the village of Sophieboeka or Dombikonde (see Fig. 1) along the central section of the Suriname river. In particular, Paulus Anake rebelled against the *Gaan Tata* cult which had a firm grip on village life; its custodians in Sophieboeka were Anake's parents. Judging from its central taboos, particularly those relating to menstrual seclusion and avoidance, a connexion with the early *Gaan Tata* cult of the Djuka appears likely.

11. Brunetti (1890) did not mention Sakka's name but it is clear from the account, with such particulars as 'the influential uncle' and 'the uncle speaking on behalf of the great council,' that only Sakka could be meant.

12. This account is, to a very large extent, a summary of what five key informants told me. Two of them clearly belong to the Granbori group; one of grandson of Sakka, the other his foster son. They were interviewed separately in April and May 1977; the first at Dritabiki, the latter at Albina on the coast where he lives in exile after becoming a *persona non grata* with some other influential descendants of Sakka. Predictably, these two informants present us with Granbori's view of recent Djuka history; an angle that has not been used previously for the reconstruction of the Djuka past. Two other key informants were found in Dritabiki. They are both members of the Misidjan clan, but are born in different lineages (*Dalaa* and *Masaa* respectively). Both men had been informants during several periods of research in the past and, when confronted with statements from Granbori informants, volunteered new information that they had never thought fit or suitable to intimate to *Bakaa* (non Bush Negroes) before. The fifth key informant comes from the *Pataa* clan and formerly resided in the village of Loabi; today he occupies an important position in the Akalali movement (Thoden van Velzen



& Van Wetering 1975). His contribution is particularly valuable because his clan and village had not been party to the Dritabiki-Granbori strife.

13. The chronology is not easy to establish. What we can indicate, however, are a bottom line and a ceiling within which the death of Coba and subsequent events have to be placed. As for the ceiling, the events related could not have happened after the middle of 1891. Carpenters from Paramaribo, building the mission post at Wanhatti on the Cottica river, witnessed an extraordinary gathering during these months. The approximately 300 Djuka who attended it swore allegiance to *Gaan Gadu*; they destroyed their amulets and other vessels of *obia* and promised to observe the new moral norms faithfully (BHW 1892: 139-144). This is the first published account confirming the existence of the new cult. All other communications that give information on the *Gaan Gadu* movement were from later years, for example 1892 or 1893.

For the bottom line, I rely on the repeated and explicit assurances of all five main informants that Coba's death and the great convocations marking the beginning of the *Gaan Gadu* religion took place *after* the inauguration of Oseisie as chief and Sakka as village headman. This is supported by Morssink's informants (1934) who stated that Sakka and Oseisie attended the convocations in the uniform given them by the colonial government. Oseisie had taken up his office in 1884, but it took the colonial administration till October 1888 before they inaugurated him. After this ceremony neither Oseisie nor Sakka seemed in a hurry to get back to their Tapanahoni villages. In fact, one of the reasons for the colonial government to offer Oseisie and his numerous following free transport by ship back to Albina — the first stage of their return trip — was to get these boarders off the government expense account. Upon his arrival at Albina, Oseisie again showed no eagerness at all to return to the Tapanahoni. In January 1889, he was still in Albina pressing charges against some Saramaka boatmen that had aroused his displeasure (LA/14-1-'89/252).

In view of the fact that the Coba enquiries by themselves took several months; considering the time involved in the great council meetings that marked the beginning of the *Gaan Gadu* cult and allowing for the considerable time required for sending delegations to the Cottica river and convening the meeting near Wanhatti, it seems likely that Coba's death occurred before the end of 1890. My hunch is that Coba died sometime in the middle of 1890. Most of the second half of that year was taken up by the enquiries, Sakka's manoeuvres, the ensuing palavers and the convocation that sealed the birth of the cult. Then, early in 1891, the *Gaan Gadu* movement spread through the hinterland with the force of an explosion.

14. One informant (from the *Pataa* clan) insisted that it was not *Sweli* who 'mounted' Coba but '*A Ogi*,' that is to say, the central deity of the new Akalali cult. In view of the important position the informant occupies in the last cult, this did not come as a surprise. What this statement attests to is the enormous significance that the Coba enquiries still have in the mind of Djuka notables today.

15. Nowadays, the exorcist wave is referred to as *Coba puu sani* — Coba took away (evil) things.

16. A number of 'carry oracles' existed before 1890 in the Tapanahoni region. Brunetti (1890: 207) saw one in operation in the village of Malobbi (near Tabiki) in 1886. Such 'carry oracles' did not enjoy tribal fame and recognition.



17. For those unfamiliar with Bush Negro religion, the scene must seem a crude mixture of burlesque and quackery. Yet for an intelligent man like Sakka, and for the majority of the Djuka who came to hear about it, it had none of these qualities. For example, the informant who related this account asked me several times whether I was not impressed by the powers of the *obia*. Only a few moments earlier the same man had explained in great detail how Sakka had prepared the occasion by hiding the bottle himself. For this informant, there was no contradiction or swindle. Two remarks about this divination may be germane here. In the first place, Sakka believed in the powers of the *Gaan Gadu obia*, but he faced the problem of convincing Oseisie quickly. With the implications of the Poeketi enquiries becoming clearer everyday, Sakka was a man in a hurry. He had no time to wait for the wavering Oseisie to be persuaded by 'ordinary' supernatural proof; that is, by the evidence provided by a number of standard divinations on the causes of affliction and subsequent cases of healing and recovery. Every day counted and Sakka intended to speed things up. Secondly, and equally important, Sakka had asked Oseisie to take the front position in the carrying of paddle and bundle. The front bearer is the one generally held responsible for proper divination. If fraud takes place, and the Djuka hold that some bearers occasionally resort to it, then it is nearly always ascribed to the front bearer. Sakka considered the test to be additional proof of the *obia's* worth as it is believed that the forces emanating from the bundle press most strongly on the front bearer. Sakka probably felt he had eliminated unnecessary risks by hiding the bottle himself; in that way he knew whether Oseisie was rendering the *obia's* directives correctly. If Oseisie had attempted to distort the divination, Sakka could have checked it from his position as hind bearer.

18. Between August 1896 and June 1899, Oseisie spent at least 50% of the time in Granbori with Sakka. During some months, for example in February 1899, Spalburg, the Moravian teacher, was the only resident of Dritabiki. The villagers either spent their time in their bush camps or were at Granbori (Spalburg 1896-1900).

19. In 1972, Akalali, a man from the Pataa clan, accused the *Gaan Gadu* priests of corruption. With the backing of popular support he stopped work at the *Gaan Gadu* oracles of Dritabiki and Granbori, forbade the carrying of corpses and posthumous punishment of witches and desecrated Santi Goon. He founded a new cult which has *A Ogi* (The Evil) as its supreme godhead. The priests of this cult reside in Njoen Konde, a few kilometres upstream from Dritabiki. They operate 'carry oracles' and have, as their predecessors, given considerable time to the detection of witches (Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering 1975). The movement has spread from the Tapanahoni to other Bush Negro regions.



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Abbreviations for journals and archival sources:

*BHW* *Berichten uit de Heiden-Wereld*

*LA* Landsarchief Paramaribo

*MBB* *Missions-Blatt aus der Brüdergemeine*

*MT* *Mitteilungen aus der Brüdergemeine*

*NB* *Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeine*

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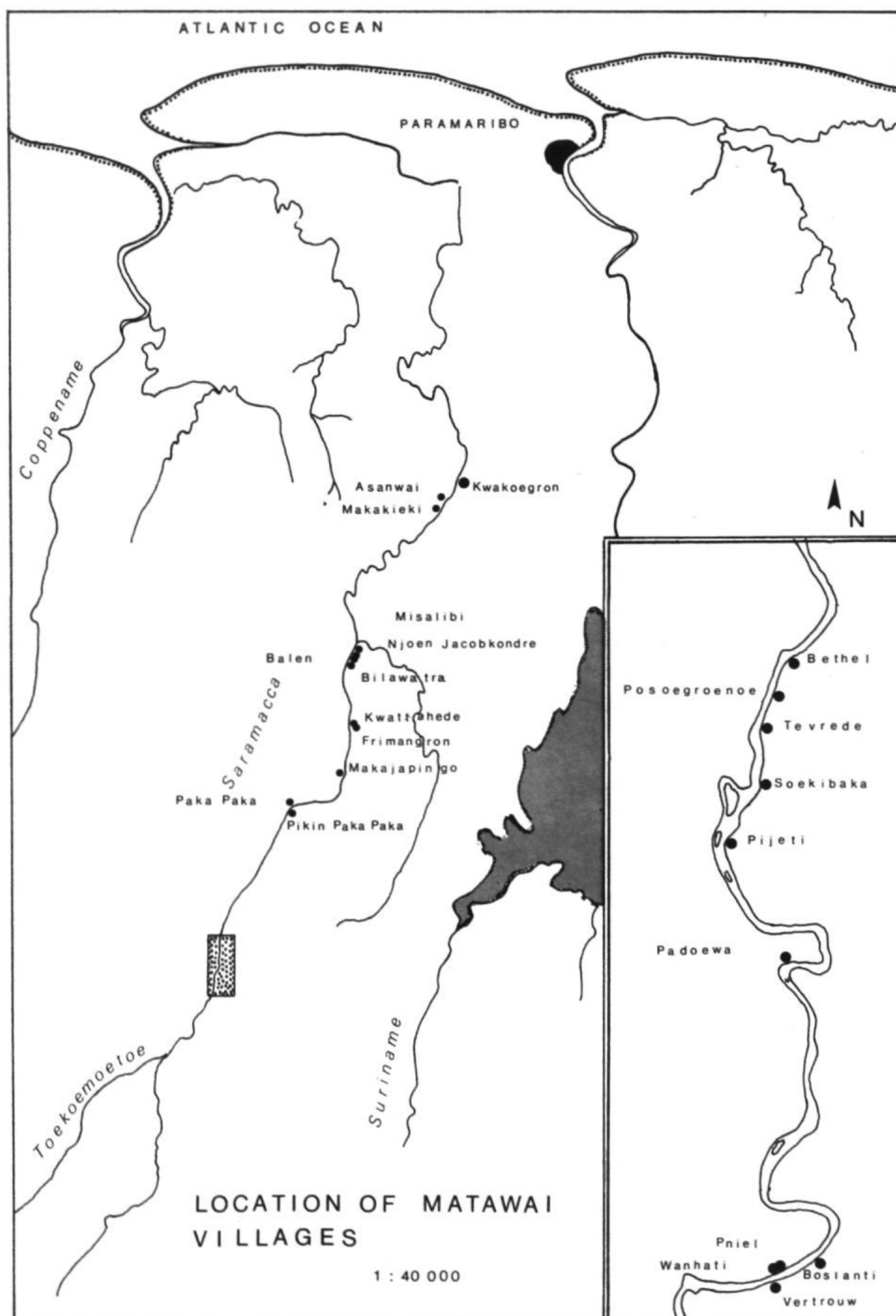
MALE ABSENTEEISM AND NUTRITION: FACTORS  
AFFECTING FERTILITY IN MATAWAI BUSH NEGRO  
SOCIETY

In Matawai society children are highly valued and large families are desired by most people. The fertility level, however, is notably low compared with similar societies. The purpose of this paper is to present and analyse Matawai demographic data in order to understand this discrepancy between motivation and actual reproductive performance. We put forward some hypotheses which relate nutritional deficiencies to reproductive instability, considering the role of men in the agricultural and ecological cycle as an intermediate variable.<sup>1</sup>

*The Matawai*

The Matawai is one of the smaller tribal groups of Bush Negroes, descendants of escaped slaves, who settled along the rivers of Surinam in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Matawai occupy a territory along the Saramacca river in the heart of Surinam's tropical rainforest. The runaways founded the first villages along the Toekoemoetoe, a tributary of the Saramacca river (see map). They later moved to that part of the Saramacca river which is situated between the mouth of the Toekoemoetoe and the rapids which divided the Matawai from the plantation colony. After the middle of the 19th century more Matawai gradually settled downstream. During the last few decades a large scale migration to Surinam's capital, Paramaribo, divided the Matawai population into those people residing in the tribal area and those residing primarily in or near the city. The upriver villages are less affected by the move







to the coast than the downstream villages. Only 14% of the four most upriver villages, 30% of the next six villages and 63% of seven downstream villages have migrated.<sup>2</sup> The total population of the 17 villages is 1,570, consisting of 777 males and 793 females, of which 356 males and 275 females are migrants. The villages Paka Paka and Pika Paka Paka belong to the Kwinti Bush Negroes who had joined the Matawai around 1860.<sup>3</sup>

A remarkable feature in the history of the Matawai is the early introduction and adoption of Christian religion in the second half of the 19th century. The Matawai prophet Johannes King played a major role in this development. Long before 1900, several mission posts were established in the downstream area and after 1919 also in the most upriver villages.

Traditionally, the Matawai economy was based on the exploitation of resources within the tribal area. It could well be characterized as a delicate balance between subsistence activities (shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing and collecting) and market oriented activities (lumbering and balata bleeding).

Villages in the upper river region consist of one or two related matrilineal descent groups. The structure of the downstream villages is more complex; they include people who choose to live in their fathers' village and their matrilineal descendants. Conjugal pairs primarily reside in the wife's homestead while the man frequently visits his own village for a couple of days. Occasionally, the whole household moves to the village of the man to attend ceremonies or simply to consolidate the bonds between the two families or matri-segments. In other cases the woman comes alone to clean the house, to wash hammocks or to clear the yard. The time that both husband and wife spend in her village exceeds in almost all cases the time in his village. Fields are usually cultivated in the domain of the woman's descent group.

The strong tendency to local endogamy facilitates the roles of men in their own matrilineal group. Adams & Kasakoff (1975) introduced a standard to compare the level of endogamy in different societies, by determining the 'group' size in



which 80% of all marriages take place. The size of the Matawai '80% group' is very small (660 calculated for the 10 upstream villages), particularly when we take the high mobility and the importance of migration into account. In comparison, for the Tiwi of Australia, a tribe of hunters and gatherers, which is considered an extreme case, this value is 500 (1975: 153).

Girls are considered marriageable after they have left school (at the age of 16 years) and usually they will begin their first marriage relation<sup>4</sup> one or two years later. For men, who are expected to have worked a few years after leaving school, the age of first marriage is four or five years higher. Age differences at second and following marriages, however, often increase to a maximum of 25 years.

It has been observed that marriage among the Bush Negroes is a rather loose relationship which ends as easily as it is formed (Hurault 1961: 157). Price (1975: 102) describes Sarakama marriage as a frequent shifting of partner. Matawai society is markedly different in this respect. In most cases, marriage is a permanent relationship. More than 60% of all married women of the upper river region are involved in their first conjugal relation. However, data on the marital history and data from the downstream area indicate that marriage relations are becoming less stable. Besides, almost all Matawai marriages are nowadays monogamous. Divorce is relatively easy when both partners agree and the relationship has not been confirmed by the church. When one of the partners disagrees with the separation, his or her lineage members will make all possible efforts to settle the dispute in order to bring the couple together. Separation is often a means to make a conflict public by the partner who supposes to have the right on his side, with the expectation that the other will plead for reunion. Certainly, temporary separations ranging from a few days to several months are not uncommon events in marital history. Relatively early after the ending of a union by divorce or death of a partner, women and, more frequently, men remarry (usually within one or two years). Nowadays, divor-



cees in their twenties are often unable to find a new partner; the migration has led to a shortage of marriageable men.

*Research methods and data collecting*

Collecting quantitative data in a Bush Negro society is not an easy task as Köbben (1967) has pointed out. Three conditions favoured the research on population characteristics in *this* Bush Negro society. First, there were written records available. The registration of church members proved to be helpful, especially for the exact birth dates of the majority of the Matawai. The local parish registers of the E.B.G. (Moravian Brethren) contained files of church members with information on vital events such as birth, baptism, marriage and reproductive history. Unfortunately, with the exception of the birth dates of the present population, these data were very incomplete. Moreover, the files of deceased members were destroyed a few years after death. The Roman Catholic church register in Paramaribo provided us with birth dates of Matawai belonging to this church. Secondly, the marriage system is fairly closed; that is to say, there are very few marriages with members of other tribes. Under such circumstances the independent collecting of data through interviews with both males and females provided us with possibilities to discover discrepancies in the data. And finally, this is one of the smallest of the Bush Negro tribes (population about 1,700) so that we did not need to work with samples and all the risks such procedures introduce.

To compile census lists we used genealogies of all descent groups in Matawai society. Most population data in this article are based on the genealogies of the ten upper river villages. As part of a larger survey, marital and reproductive histories were collected for all adult males and females, in this same group of villages.

Material obtained from the survey and genealogies was constantly checked against the information that became known to us through some standard anthropological techniques, such as participant observation and the use of key informants.



We had to be on our guard against the distortion of demographic data that resulted from migration. The move of Bush Negroes of all tribes to Paramaribo has presently reached a massive scale. However, the recent nature of this phenomenon for the upstream Matawai<sup>5</sup> and the fact that most of the collected demographic data are retrospective in nature makes it unlikely that this will prejudice our results. The data on seasonality of births include a number of births of mothers who recently settled in the downstream villages as well as of mothers who migrated to Paramaribo. Yet, the number of children born in town is small.

Information on mobility<sup>6</sup> was collected for all females, males and male affines of the four most upriver villages over a two year period (1973-1975).

#### *Low fertility and the desire for children*

Children are highly valued in Matawai society. People are seriously concerned about the continuity of the matrilineal descent group. People belonging to the same descent group are referred to as *du wan bee* (of the same womb). Their involvement in the continuity and welfare of the lineage is expressed in ancestor cults and in the ceremonies related to *rites de passage* of its members.

At the occasion of a *da koosu* (the giving of a skirth to a girl to mark her social maturity) a short speech is given by her paternal aunt in which her reproductive capability is stressed: 'you must wear this *koosu* on top of another and give birth to lots of children. Don't look at me, I am a poor example'. Other women of the girl's father's lineage enter the scene trying to touch the pubic hair and breasts of the shy, naked girl, cheerfully shouting 'man or no man, you have to give birth to children for your *bee*'.

People generally agreed that '*miii na gudu*' (children mean wealth), referring to their helpfulness and companionship. Both men and women who have many children enjoy prestige. People without children are pitied and traditional medicines to improve fertility are used by women who do not readily conceive.



Characteristics of Matawai society which are often related to a high level of fertility are the existence of corporate unilineal descent groups as basic units of social organization,<sup>7</sup> high child mortality<sup>8</sup> and the absence of modern contraceptives.

Traditionally, few effective devices to avoid pregnancy are known. Some men are said to prepare medicines (*obias*) which they drink to avoid the pregnancy of women with whom they have extra-marital relations. As in most other societies *coitus interruptus* is sometimes practised to prevent conception. Abortifacients prepared from herbs and lemons are traditionally known. At present, anti-malaria pills of the government are occasionally saved to be used as abortifacients in the downstream area. The thought of practising abortion horrified people. In fact, there were only a few accusations against women who were said to have practised abortion. Our impression is that abortion is not practised frequently and does not substantially decrease the fertility level.

Recently, doctors of the clinic of the Moravian Brethren (located opposite Posoegroenoe) assembled the villagers to discuss the possibilities of birth control. These attempts were met with little resistance because most people could imagine that women with large families and difficult deliveries wanted to avoid further pregnancy. This attitude changed when it became known that some young women had begun to use contraceptives. This came to the surface during our short visit to Boslanti in the summer of 1976.

Sunday morning after church, the village headman called for a meeting in the council house (*kuutu gangasa*). Such meetings were regularly held to regulate village affairs. This time the main issue was *puu bee* (abortion). The headman had been informed by the schoolteacher that young single women were using pills to avoid childbirth. He called this meeting to warn these women and their mothers to give up these practices. If not he would call their names in public. He noticed that he, returning from a stay on the coast, had passed a village which was, for the time being, completely deserted and he pointed out that the same fate would strike one of the neighbouring villages where no children had been born during the past few years. Loudly shouting men started to inveigh against the women, who were blamed for depopulation. Should a woman not desire a child, there were always enough women who wanted to foster one. The reaction of the women was laconic since 'if they had pills they were given them by men.'



Afterwards we heard that labourers of the Geological Service had supplied contraceptive pills to young women with whom they had initiated sexual relations. However, the accusation at the council was also directed to the doctors who had prudently informed people about the possibilities of birth control. On this meeting as well as on other occasions it was clear that Matawai worried about depopulation and that they desired large families.

TABLE 1

Marital status of women in ten upstream  
villages according to age

age-group	never married	ever married			total in age group	% married in age-group
		<i>currently</i>	<i>widowed</i>	<i>divorced</i>		
15—19	25	8	—	6	39	20.5
20—24	4	16	—	7	27	59.2
25—29	1	15	—	5	21	71.4
30—34	3	17	1	3	24	70.8
35—39	—	26	1	—	27	96.3
40—44	—	26	1	5	32	81.2
45—54	3	32	1	3	39	82.0
55—64	—	30	5	4	39	76.9
65—74	—	12	10	5	27	44.4
75—	—	1	7	—	8	12.5
totals	36	183	26	38	283	64.6

It is amazing, however, to see how low Matawai fertility is. Compared with another tribal society in Surinam, the Carib Indians of Galibi with a total fertility rate of 10,400 (Kloos 1971: 102), the comparable Matawai rate is very low at 3,953. Also, the birth rates are considerably lower than the figure which Romaniuk (1968: 214) considers as 'normal' crude birth rates for African societies.<sup>9</sup>

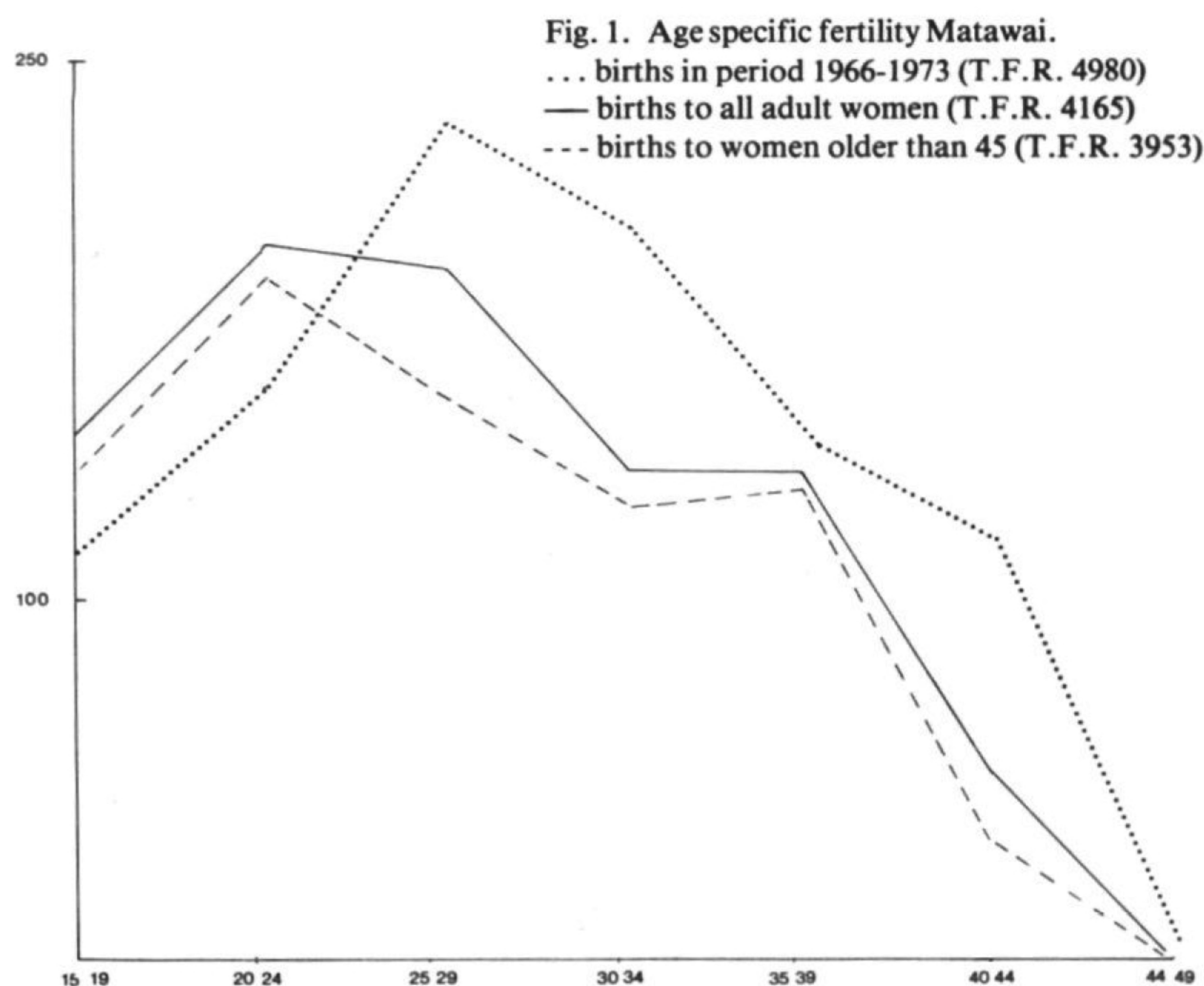
In the following part we will consider social and ecological factors which may reduce the level of fertility.



*Marriage, divorce and infertility*

As marital status is an important determinant of fertility, we will consider some characteristics of the Matawai marriage system which are relevant for the fertility level.

Table 1 gives the distribution of the women of 10 upstream villages according to age and marital status. The percentages of divorced women in the lowest age classes is high. Despite the fact that these divorced women conceive in extra-marital relations, their fertility is considerably lower than that of married women. The high percentage of young divorcees causes a drop in the level of fertility in the lower age classes. The high number of married women, however, in the last ten years of the reproductive span, will promote the fertility level in the highest age groups.



In figure 1 we present three variations of age-specific fertility based on different calculations.<sup>10</sup> The first is based on all



adult women, the second on women with a completed or almost completed reproductive history (45 years and older) and the third on births in the period 1966-1974. A remarkable feature in the first two patterns is the rise of fertility from age category 30-34 to 35-39 and in the recent pattern of high fertility between ages 40-44. These patterns of age specific fertility deviate from the normal pattern by the relative high concentration in the higher age classes.

The percentage of women older than 45 without live births is large at 14%.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the number of women with a completed reproductive span who have a low number of births is considerable (see table 2). Accordingly, the women who contribute to the fertility level are relatively few. Women with a large number of births have longer (actual) reproductive spans. Logically, this will influence the contribution of the higher age classes to the total level of fertility.

TABLE 2 Number of births by age of woman

age-group	number of children														mean number of births per woman
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	N	
15-19	31	9	1											41	0.27
20-24	10	12	4	1	1									28	0.96
25-29	7	2	6	8		1	1	1	1	1				28	2.25
30-34	3	5	6	4	2	3	2	2						27	2.89
35-39	3	4	1	8	2	1	2	2	3	2	1			29	4.17
40-44	4	5	6	2	3	5	2	1	2	5	1	1		37	4.35
45-49	3	2	1	3	5	—	7	2	2					25	4.20
50—	16	13	15	8	11	13	8	6	9	3	4		1	107	3.90
totals	77	52	40	34	24	23	22	14	17	11	6	1	1	322	3.08

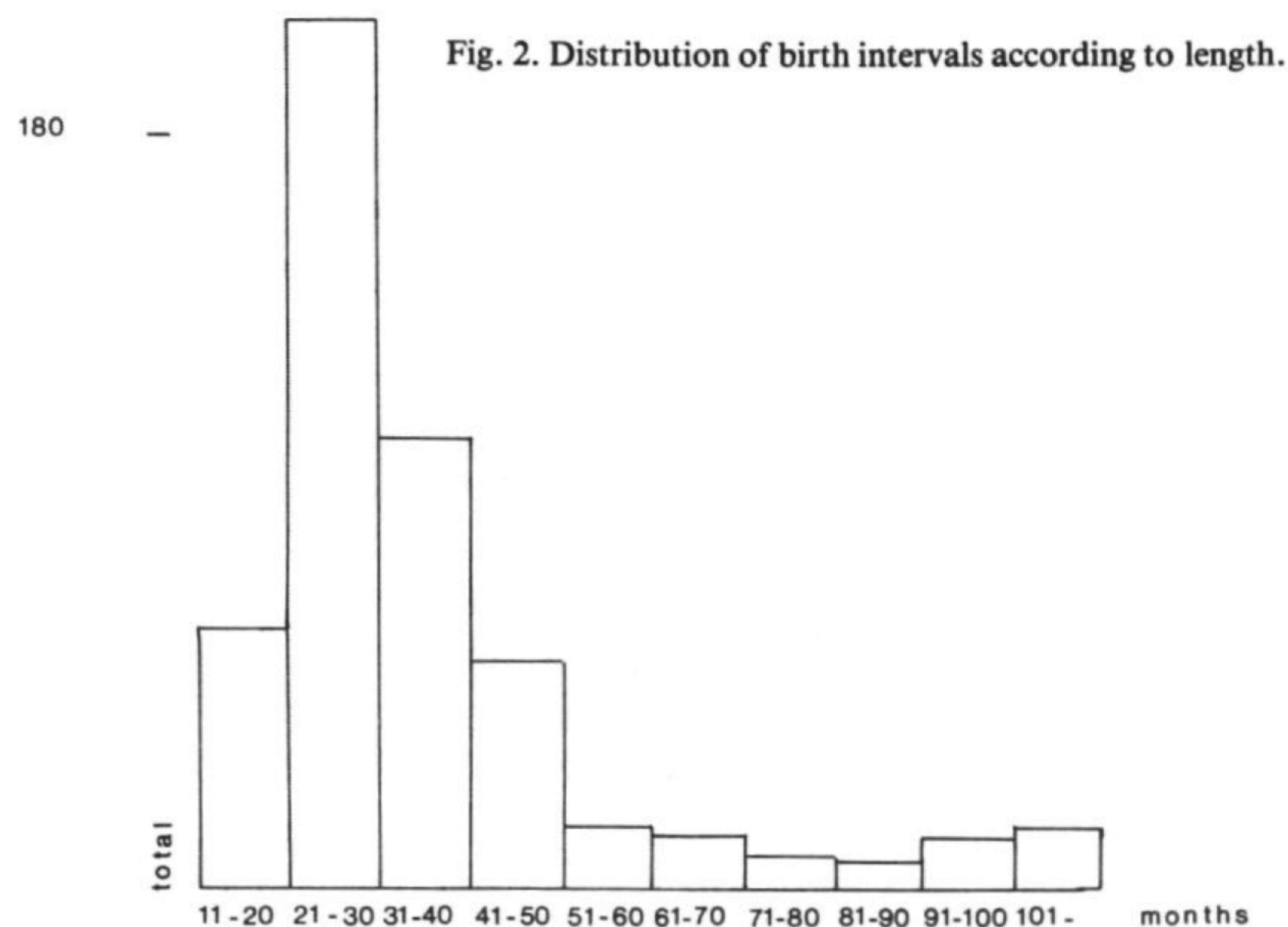
Total number of births (993) of 322 adult women in ten upstream Matawai villages

Cultural norms and institutions play a distinctive role in lengthening the birth interval. The Matawai are fairly explicit about the time between a birth and a next conception. While regular sexual relations of a pregnant woman with the future father are believed necessary for the growth of the foetus, after



delivery these relations are seen as harmful for a period of 9 to 10 months (the child would be retarded in its walking development). It seems that norms of women and men here diverge; some men restricted the taboo on post-partum relations to 3 or 4 months. Breastfeeding is continued as long as the child can not walk great distances. When the child begins to walk (from 11 to 14 months), it is desired that the mother will become pregnant again.<sup>12</sup>

Matawai women usually have a lactation period of about fourteen months. From birth, breastfeeding is supplemented with water. After about four months some additional food is given in the form of manioc flour diluted with water, and at weaning the food consists of soft cooked rice with water.



Looking at the actual birth intervals (see figure 2) we can infer that sexual relations after child birth are often resumed earlier than the 9 months term. In fact, the range of the distribution of birth intervals is large, beginning at 11 months and showing a peak around 24 months.



A variable which is complementary to birth intervals is the actual reproductive span. Long birth intervals combined with a short reproductive span will cause low fertility. The average reproductive span in Matawai is rather short at 10 years calculated for women with a completed reproductive span. This period is reduced by the relatively large number of women with few or no births. The shortness of the actual reproductive span in Matawai is crucial in the understanding of low fertility and we will return to this in a later section.

A frequently used explanation for infertility is the incidence of venereal diseases. According to the Matawai, venereal diseases began to spread in their territory when large groups of men started to work outside the tribal area. An early source, a government document written in the middle of the nineteenth century, said that venereal disease did not exist in Matawai society (Corsten 1849). It is difficult to evaluate these findings but we have evidence that in the late 1940s, a healer in one of the upstream villages was specialized in its treatment, using traditional medicines. Men now prefer to go to the clinic where antibiotics offer a more effective treatment. A clinic official estimated that about 50% of the registered men had been treated in the past eight years. Additional medical research on the causes of infecundity is required before we can evaluate the contribution of venereal diseases to Matawai's low fertility level.

#### *Male absenteeism and the ecological cycle*

Matawai men spend a considerable part of their time away from their families. In the following sections we will review the ecological determinants of male absenteeism and its influence as a direct factor on the regularity of sexual relations and the probability of conception. Secondly, we will explore male absenteeism as an indirect factor on the level of fertility.

Matawai are similar to most populations in South America's rainforests in that they are to a large degree economically dependent on the horticultural system known as 'shifting culti-



vation,' which is based on the rotation of fields instead of the rotation of crops. The labour organization is characterized by an interplay of different activities connected with horticulture, wage labour, hunting, fishing and gathering. For food the Matawai are largely dependent on their subsistence economy. Regular communication with the coastal area had not led to the cultivation of cash crops. Only a few food products are imported from the coast. Salt is needed in large quantities for the conservation of fish and hunting game. Sugar, flour, dried fish and salted meat are occasionally bought in small quantities. In years of scarcity some rice is bought. More money is needed for other essentials such as hammocks, clothes, kitchen utensils, outboard motors, fuel and even for luxuries as radios, rum, beer, etc.

Before 1960 the focus of money earning activities was located within the tribal area. Men swarmed in groups of twenty or more to the tributaries of the Saramacca river to log wood. The timber rafts were floated to the downstream post of Kwakoe-gron where they were sold to traders. The incomes acquired with these activities were quite stable, ranging from Sf. 200 to 600.<sup>13</sup> The major alternatives were balata bleeding and the work in the goldfields.<sup>14</sup> Balata bleeding and lumbering were equally conditioned by climatic factors. The balata milk could best be dried in the dry season and the transport of timber was strongly dependent on the water level of the Saramacca river. Sandbanks in the dry season and turbulent waterfalls in the rainy season could make transport of timber rafts impossible. The water level reacts rapidly to changing weather conditions, causing a considerable fluctuation of the level in the Saramacca river. Fluctuations of up to five metres have been recorded.

TABLE 3      Rainfall in Boslanti (1964-1973), in mm

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
207	196	228	260	365	320	217	120	68	35	75	145



The rainfall data<sup>15</sup> (table 3) we obtained for the ten year period 1964-1973 for Boslanti give an indication of the most suitable months for the transport of timber and the processing of the balata. Particularly unfavourable are the months October and November when the water reaches its lowest level and the months May and June when the level is generally too high.

Our data from 25 work histories are in accordance with these observations. In most cases work ends in August or September; variations exist in the length and beginning of the work periods, traditionally ranging from two to five months. The collective character of lumbering had the effect that the seasonality of absenteeism was further reinforced.

Climatic conditions are not the only restriction on the working periods of men. The agricultural cycle is even more important. The division of labour and the contribution of males to the agricultural cycle is most manifest around August when plots are cleared. Cutting undergrowth, felling trees and burning are exclusively male activities. The process of burning is recognized as essential and it requires at least a month of drying under good weather conditions. This also explains why men return to the villages in August at the beginning of the dry season. After the first crops (manioc, plantain, watermelon and corn) are planted before the turning of the year, short shopping trips are made to Paramaribo. Before the heavy rains begin to fall in May, the fields are wholly cleared of weeds before rice is planted. Both men and women participate in these activities. While the women stay in the fields to keep an eye on the newly planted rice and to drive the birds away, men pound large quantities of rice and prepare manioc cakes for their stay on the working sites. Once the work parties have left the villages in May and June, the population is largely reduced to women and children, who care for the fields. In July and August, when the rice begins to ripen, the peak in the women's activities is reached. The rice harvest is an exclusive female activity and men have no tasks in the fields. In these months the division of labour is most pronounced.

In the late 1950s, other work opportunities gradually became available when Bush Negroes were needed for the



exploration of Surinam's vast interior. Government agencies and contractors paid considerably higher wages than the money the Bush Negroes could acquire by lumbering. When in the early 1960s the traditional way of lumbering began to lose its significance, the men assembled and agreed to give up this kind of work definitively. The market oriented activities were no longer restricted to the tribal area. The government services employed Bush Negroes on remote sites in the interior, sometimes far away from the inhabited areas. This resulted in the beginning of a large scale migration to the coast where all administrative centres are. Very few men reside more than twenty years in the city. In the last decade many Matawai women also joined their husbands in town. A number of migrants travel between tribal area and town, such as women fulfilling their traditional obligations towards relatives by helping in the rice harvest or attending rituals at times of crises. Men who stayed behind in the villages partly continued the seasonal labour pattern, working periodically in the lumber concessions of Creoles and Hindustani. Some older men found odd jobs, making boats, building houses or preparing fields for migrated relatives.<sup>16</sup> The recent changes in the labour pattern did not lead to a significant change in the seasonal character of male absenteeism. This is mainly because of the shifting cultivation that remained a constant factor in the pattern of male activities.

#### *Male absenteeism and the level of fertility*

We collected data on absenteeism of the population of four upstream villages. In figure 3 we summarize the data on male and female absenteeism of 59 males, residents and affines and of 86 females in the fertile ages.<sup>17</sup> The peaks in the pattern of male absenteeism coincide with peaks in the female pattern with the exception of the period March-September when the division of labour along the sex line is most distinct. The total time that these men are out of the tribal area is 25%.<sup>18</sup>

The question here is to what extent does the absence of men



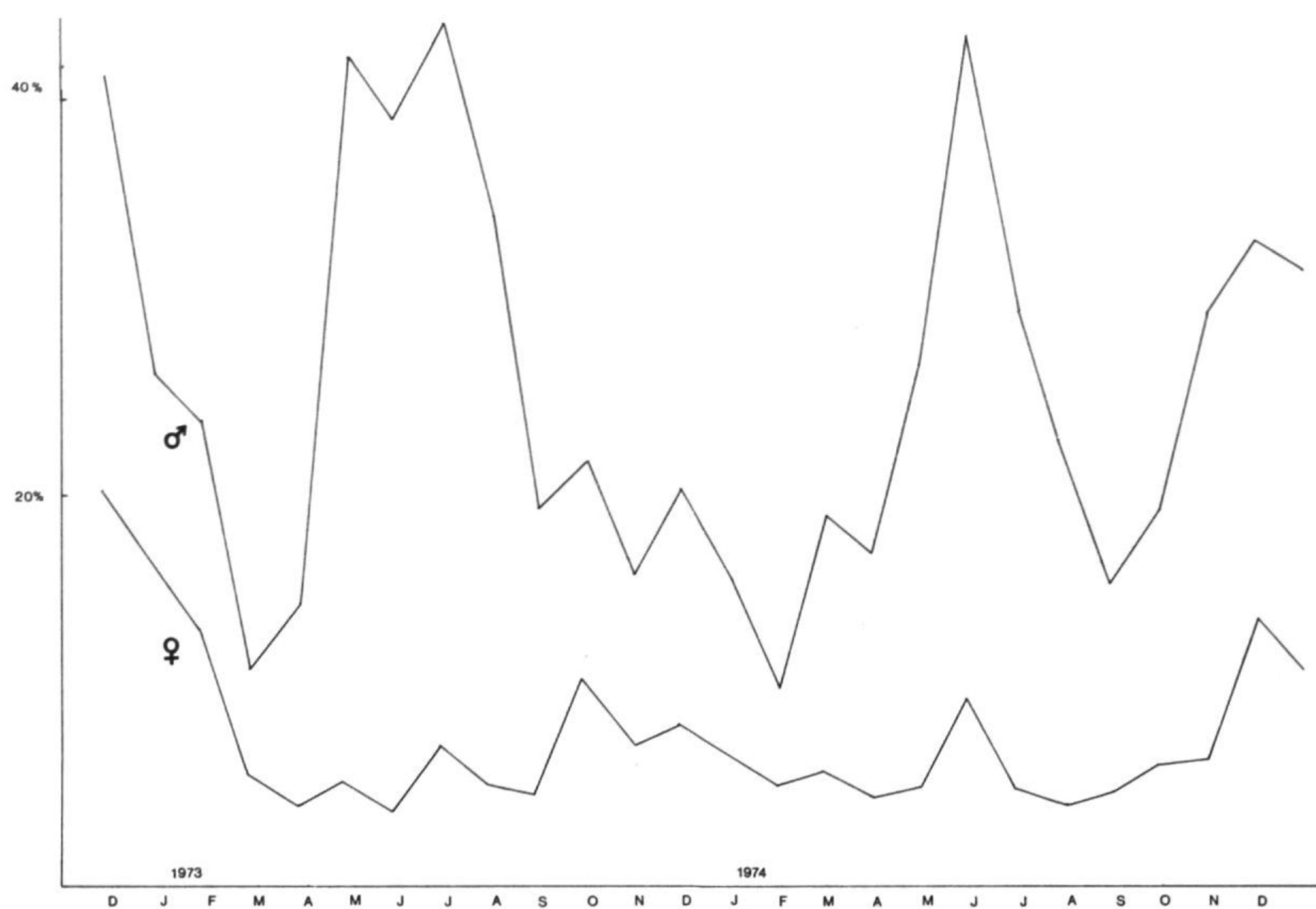


Fig. 3. Male and Female Absenteeism 1973 and 1974.

Males between 15 and 55 years of age. Females between 15 and 49 years of age. Migrants are excluded.



from the tribal areas, when their woman remain behind, lengthen the birth interval? The interval is composed in part of the months of pregnancy and post-partum infecundity, both periods that do not allow conception, and can easily comprise 21 or 22 months. Looking at the total time of the interval, the rate of male absenteeism in Matawai society could prolong the interval at most by a few percentage points. To be more precise we will base our calculation on Bourgeois-Pichat's model for natural fertility (Bourgeois-Pichat 1965). This model generates a number of variants of age specific fertility patterns under various conditions and replicate the reproductive cycle from sexual intercourse to live birth.<sup>19</sup> An essential element in the model is the waiting time (the time needed to conceive) which is derived from the frequency of sexual intercourse. To estimate the effect of male absenteeism we have adapted the waiting time for the Matawai to a situation in which males are absent during 3 cycles per annum of 13 cycles.<sup>20</sup> The Bourgeois-Pichat model predicts a decrease of the fertility rate of *only* 2.07%.

We used Matawai demographic data to control the aptness of the selected variant of Bourgeois-Pichat's model. The observed Matawai age specific fertility pattern comes close to the chosen variant after reducing the theoretical maximal reproductive span to the actual reproductive span and by taking into account the reproductive decrease within the reproductive span caused by the dissolution of marital unions. The conclusion is that temporary male absenteeism among the Matawai does not present us with a simple cause and effect explanation. The decrease in the frequency of sexual intercourse as a result of absenteeism does not contribute significantly to the low fertility figures.

### *Seasonality of birth*

It can be expected that the seasonal absenteeism of men will cause a fluctuation in monthly birth rates. Birth data of children born to all females of the ten upper river villages show indeed a remarkable pattern of seasonality. The monthly

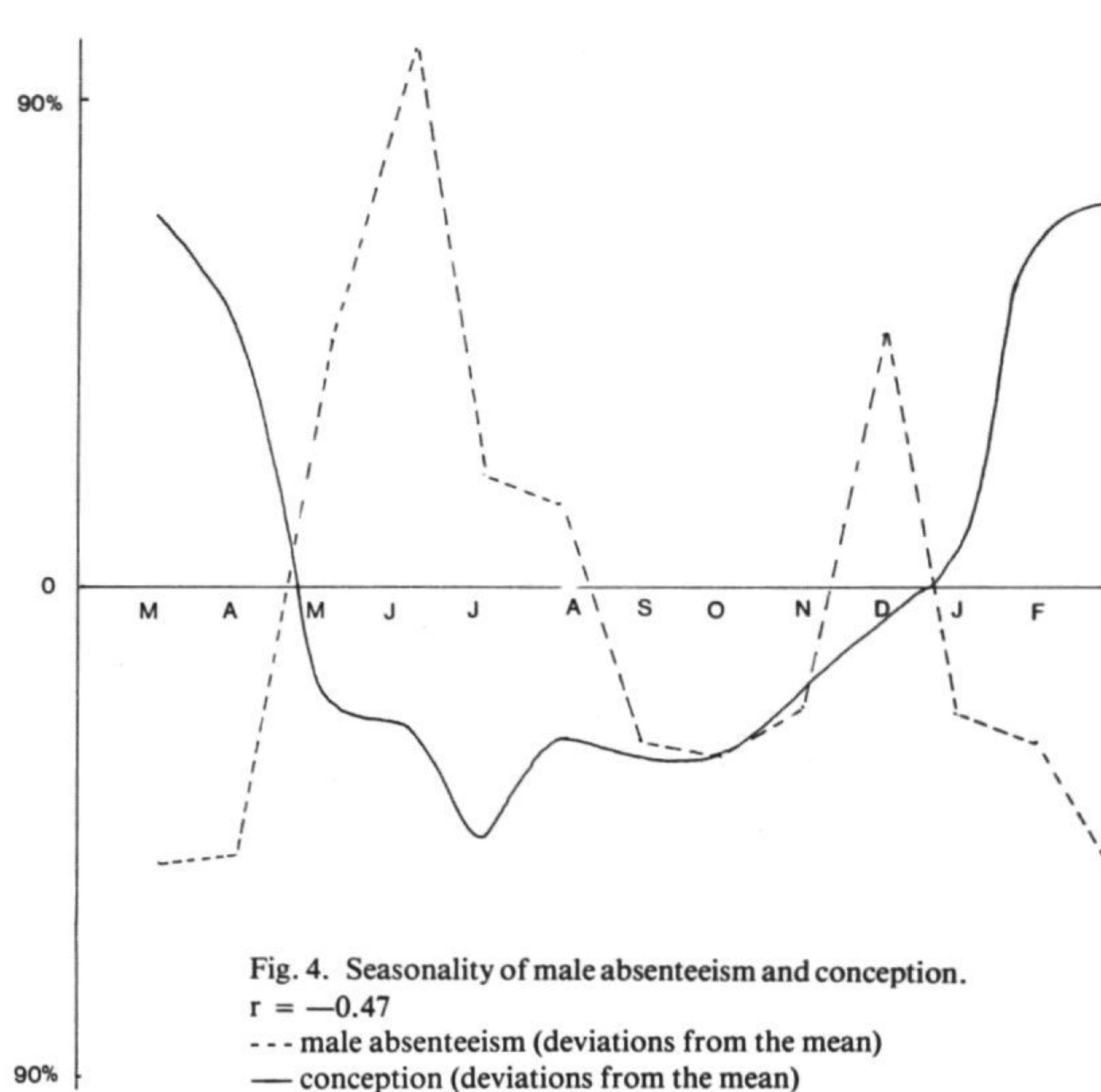






considerable lower than the values of 168 and 125 calculated for both periods (before 1960 and 1960-1974) in Matawai society.

Before we will look to specific causes of the seasonality, it must be pointed out that the seasonal pattern is reinforced by the fact that there is a clear peak in the birth intervals observable around 24 months. That is, when one birth takes place in the peak season, the next will probably follow in the same period of the year.



Let us now examine whether the pattern of seasonal absenteeism will correlate with the pattern of seasonality of conceptions.<sup>21</sup> In figure 4 we combine data on male absenteeism (de-

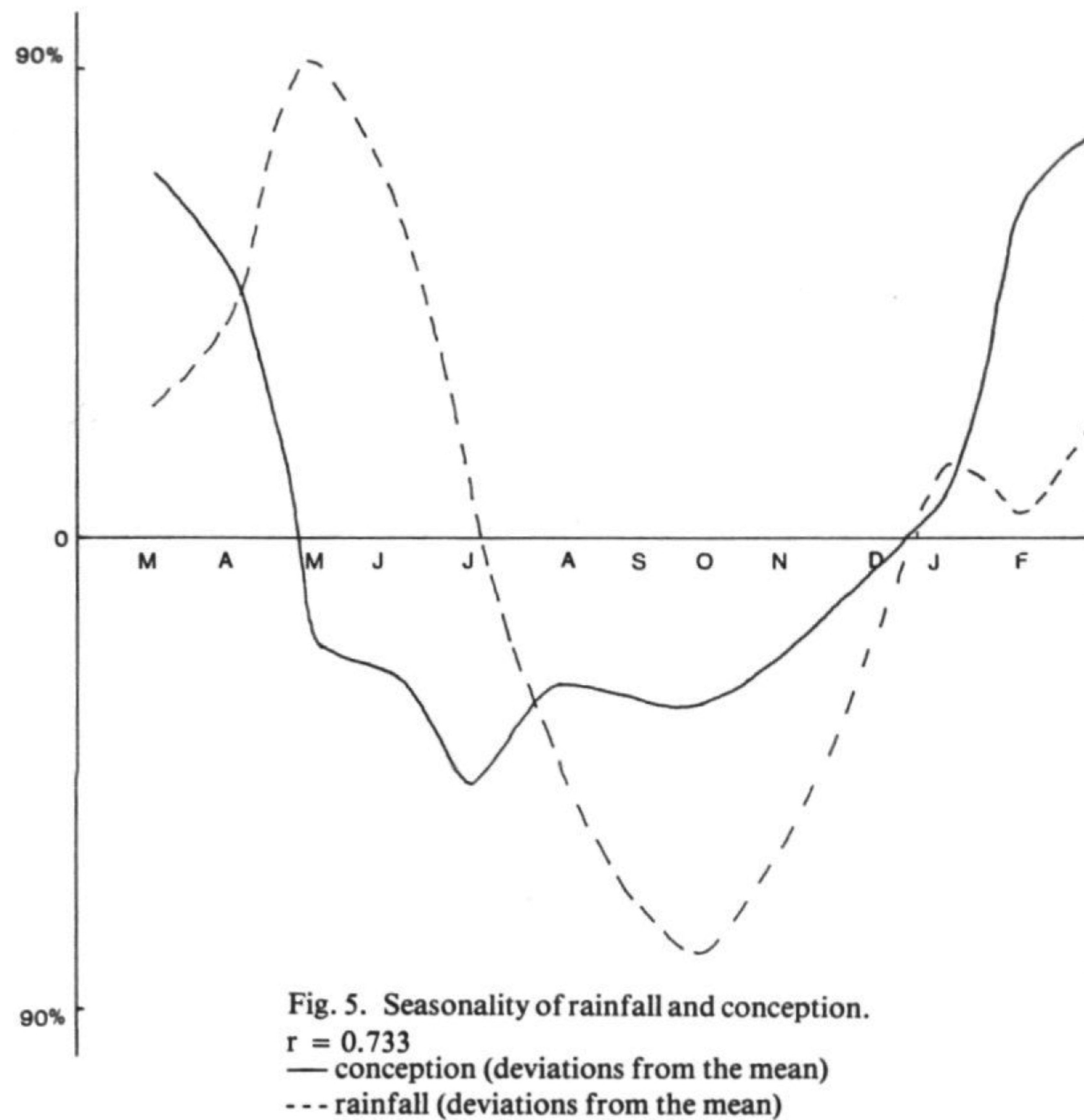


viations from the mean calculated over a two year period of men between 15 and 55) and data on seasonality of birth (also deviations from the mean). On the whole, the graphic presentation shows a strong negative correlation, as could be expected. However, examining the pattern more closely, the three months period comprising September, October and November does not show the expected increase of conceptions. In other words, the time of return of most men from the coast is *not* related with an increase in the conception rate. The question that has to be posed is *what* causes the first three months of male presence to be passed without a marked increase in conceptions? We have looked for an answer in the organization of work in traditional society. Almost immediately upon their return, the men are busy with the work of felling trees in the hottest period of the year. This keeps them on their garden plots and out of the villages. It is arduous work that presumably negatively influences their physical condition and their eagerness for sexual intercourse. However, the total time spend in these activities seldom exceeds a fortnight. Moreover, the image Matawai have of *dewei* (dry season) is one of leisure, spending the day with the family in the shadow on a sandbank upriver with an abundance of fish and iguana eggs.

We are left with the fact that September, October and November are the driest months of the year and also have the highest temperatures. It has frequently been observed that in the hot season the lowest number of conceptions occur. According to Thompson & Robbins (1973) referring to the work of Pasamanick et al. (1959, 1960), extreme high temperatures may act to lessen both sexual activity and sperm viability, thereby reducing the chance of conception. The rainy season tends to be associated with a high conception rate. Matawai society is no exception to this rule; the correlation between conception and rainfall is high (see figure 5). However, we have to be careful with the assumption of a direct relationship between climate and frequency of intercourse.

Cantrelle & Léridon (1971), for example, found in rural Senegal that the number of conceptions reaches a minimum during the rainy season and a maximum during the following





quarter which is the first after harvest. They suggest that nutritional factors play a role. This finding is in agreement with recent work on biological determinants of fertility which shows the importance of nutritional factors in the reproductive process. Frisch (1975), in her article on the demographic implications of certain biological determinants, discusses the effects of nutrition on reproductive capability. She points out that nutritional factors influence all stadia of the reproductive process. She concludes that undernutrition and energy-requiring activities may affect the fecundity of marginally nourished populations much more than has been realized. One of the factors she mentions is most relevant in connection with the seasonality of births, the stable reproductive capability. Her

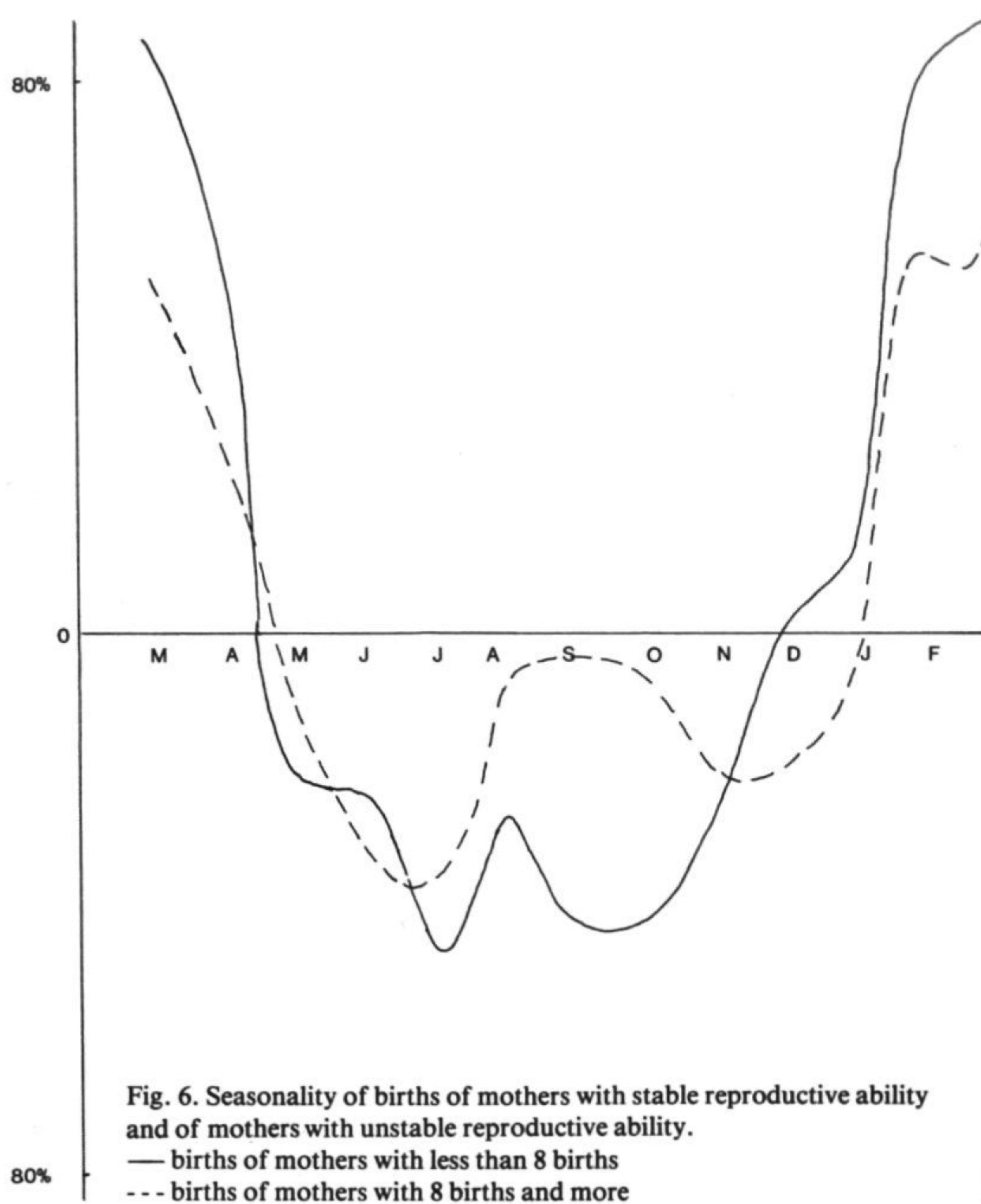


discussion of the nutritional effects on the reproductive capability is focused on the restoration and maintenance of a minimum *fat* level. In other studies it is pointed out that the suppression of ovulation is a response to dietary deficiencies in protein, as well as calories, vitamin B, vitamin E, and certain minerals (Katz 1972:357, Zuckerman 1962:294-300, see Binford & Chasko 1976:115).

In Matawai society food, especially meat, is an important item in daily conversation. The question '*I findi gbangba tidei?*' (did you find meat or fish today) has almost the meaning of a greeting, and '*gbangba angi ta ki' mi*' (I'm starving from hunger for meat) is the daily complaint. A great deal of the women's activities is focused on food production and preparation. In most years the field supplies enough rice, plantains and manioc for the household. However, the deficiency of protein is most distinct in the diet. The contribution, for instance, of peanuts and beans to the diet is small. The main staples, rice and manioc, used in great quantities, are poor in protein. For protein Matawai depend on game and fish which have become scarce near the populated areas (Geijskes 1954a, 1954b). Doornbos (1966: 44) mentions the protein component as the weakest in the diet of the Bush Negro<sup>22</sup> and points out that this component is heavily influenced by seasonal factors.

Contrary to the findings of Cantrelle & Léridon for rural Senegal, in Matawai society the time of harvest coincides with the lowest number of conceptions. But there may be another line of explanation available which keeps close to the Cantrelle & Léridon argument. The harvest months are also those when the availability of fish and game has reached a minimum and the deficiencies of the diet are most pronounced. The men, who usually provide their wives with meat and fish, are on the coast and the possibilities for women to supplement their diet with fish are restricted by the unfavourable water level and the labour intensive and time consuming rice harvest. It seems likely that the restoration of the protein and fat levels, which had dropped to a minimum by the time of the return of the men, will take a few months. This may give an explanation for the fact that the incidence of conception is higher in the





months preceding the departure of the men to the coast.<sup>23</sup>

When nutritional deficiencies play a role in the observed anomaly, we may also expect that mothers with a regular reproductive pattern are less sensitive to these factors than women with an unstable reproductive capacity. Comparison of the seasonal patterns of mothers with eight and more births with those of mothers with fewer births, reveals significant differences for the three months after the return of men (see figure 6). Our data are not conclusive that these factors are exclusive-



ly nutritional. We have no information on the influence of parasitic diseases or health conditions of particular women (which would interplay with nutritional factors) on the seasonal pattern of births nor do we have reliable data on stillbirths which also may have played a role.<sup>24</sup>

The time that elapses between the return of the men from the coast and the restoration of adequate fat and protein levels in the females of reproductive age is our main explanation of the low number of conceptions in this period. Moreover, if nutrition is an important variable causing seasonal differences in the birth rate, then we can also expect this variable to work on another level, by reducing the reproductive span (see Frisch 1975: 20). As we have pointed out earlier, the average reproductive span in Matawai is limited to 10 years. On this point it is pertinent to return to the Caribs of Galibi with their rich resources of fish. Kloos (1971: 55, 269) clearly points out that their protein supply from fish is quite sufficient and that their diet is adequate. In Carib society the high level of fertility is linked with an extraordinarily long reproductive span (30 years) (Kloos 1971:100-102). Finally, the seasonal variation may only give an indication of the role of nutritional deficiencies. These exist the whole year, but are most prominent in one half of the year.

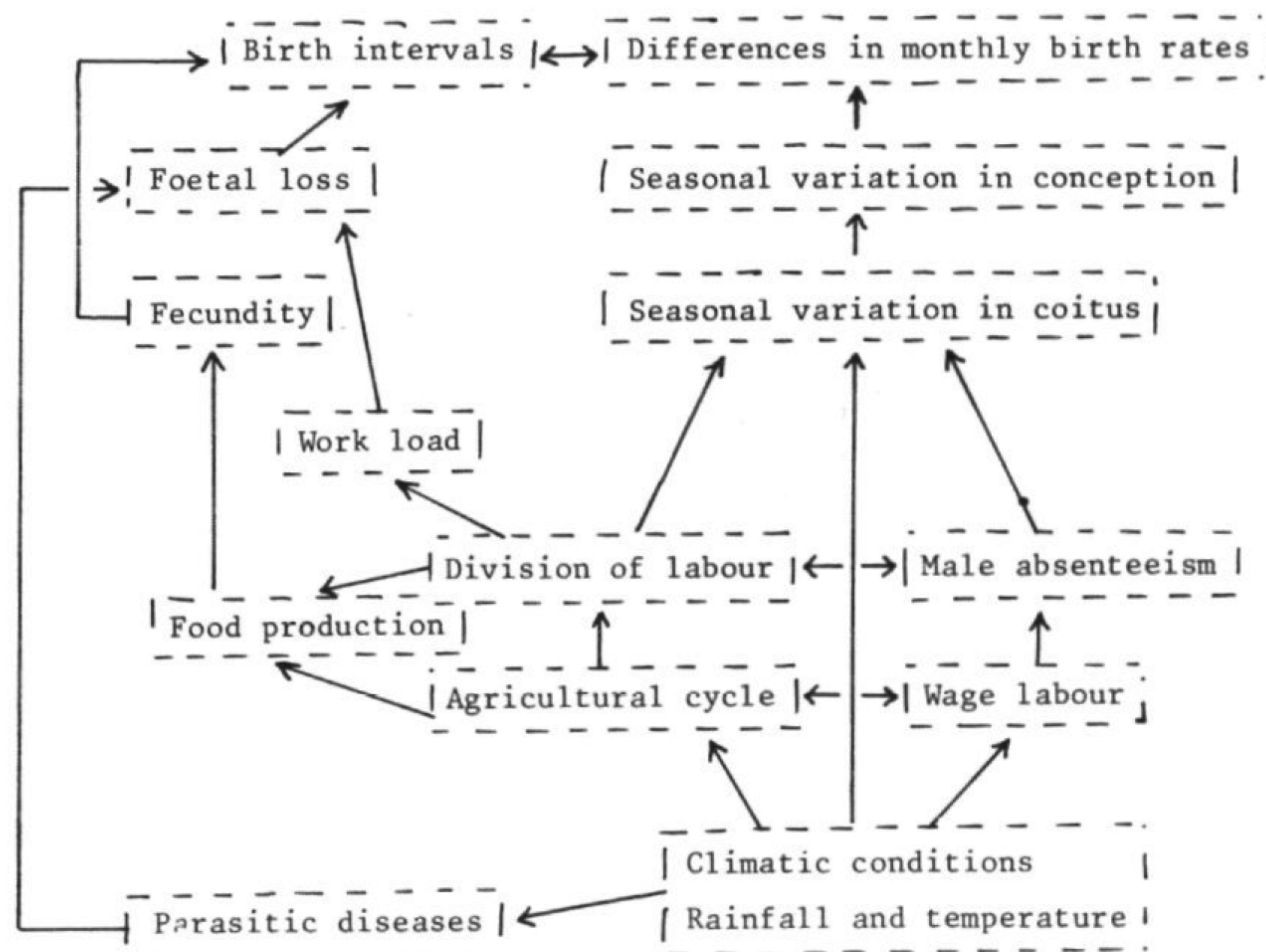
### *Final Remarks*

The study of seasonal variations in births is important for the discovery of variables which influence the probability of birth and conception. The first task of such a study is the consideration of intercourse variables. Research on biological variables is further complicated by the chain of intermediate variables which can cause larger ranges of variation than the direct intercourse-conception relation. Data, for instance, on climatic, dietary or parasitic factors affecting the viability of the foetus are difficult to acquire in those societies where they are most influential. In the following flow chart we summarize the suggested variables which are likely to contribute to the



seasonality of birth in Matawai. We focused our analysis on seasonal variation of live births, male absenteeism and nutrition. Some factors remained unexplored, such as the relation between workload and foetal loss and the influence of parasitic diseases. Despite these unavoidable omissions we tried to unfold part of the intricate pattern of biological, social and cultural factors which stand behind demographic data in this particular Bush Negro society.

Fig. 7. Factors affecting differences in monthly birth rates





## NOTES

1. We wish to thank Gary and Rosemary Brana-Shute, H.J. Heeren, Humphrey Lamur, Gigi Santow and Bonno Thoden van Velzen for their critical comments on an earlier draft, although the statements expressed herein remain the responsibility of the authors. Fieldwork among the Matawai was conducted from November 1972 to December 1974. The fieldwork was financed by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). We wish to thank all the Matawai for their generous hospitality and their cooperation.

2. Migrants are those people who reside primarily in the coastal area, predominantly in and near Paramaribo and who are referred to as such by their relatives in the tribal area and by other Matawai in town. We include the migrants who Matawai classify as '*nango ta kon*' (they come and go) in as far as they spend more than 50% of their time on the coast. It must be noted that population data on the two most downstream Matawai villages (Asanwai and Makakieki) are excluded, as well as data from the Kwinti villages Paka Paka and Pikin Paka Paka.

3. Part of this tribe left the Saramacca river and went to the Coppename after a conflict with the Matawai chief Noah Adrai (1883).

4. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman which is initiated by the public ceremony '*da manu ku mujee*' (giving a woman to a man).

5. Most migrants from the upstream area have been living in town less than ten years.

6. Our observations on church attendance were useful. Information about church absentees could be collected with the help of a key informant the following day.

7. This is in accordance with Lorimer's hypothesis (1954: 97) that corporate unilineal descent groups generate strong motives for high fertility.

8. The child mortality rate (0-4) is still high despite considerable improvement in the last decades. It has decreased from a level of 400 (1950) to 111 (1973).

In this article we use the following demographic concepts:

*Fertility*: the actual reproductive performance.

*Fecundity*: the capacity to reproduce.

*Natural Fertility*: the number of children a non-contracepting woman can conceive over her reproductive period.

*Age Specific Fertility Rate*: annual births per 1,000 women in age group divided by the midyear population of women.

*Total Fertility Rate*: the sum total of age specific fertility. This rate represents the number of children that would be born per 1,000 females experiencing no mortality.

*Crude Birth Rate*: the number of births in a given year divided by the number of population in the middle of the given year; this rate is given per 1,000.

*Birth interval*: time period between two successive live births of one mother.

*Actual Reproductive Span*: time between first and last live birth of mother with completed reproductive period.

*Reproductive period*: the time between first menses (menarche) and the cessation of menstruation (menopause) in women.





Phot. 2. The butchering of hunting game (tapir).



*Waiting time:* the period of exposure to the risk of conception.

*Child Mortality Rate:* number of deaths to children under five years of age in a given period divided by the number of children born in the same period; this rate is given per 1,000.

9. Crude birth rates between 50-60 per 1,000 in African populations are considered as 'normal' (Romaniuk 1968: 214). The Matawai crude birth rate is considerably lower, fluctuating around 30 in the last few years (1970-1973).
10. In two cases we used the retrospective method to calculate the age specific and total fertility rate. First, for women older than 45 years of age of ten upper river villages at January, 1974 (TFR = 3953). Second, for all adult women of the same villages at the same date (TFR = 4165). We used the prospective method for the calculation of the third total fertility rate, which is based on all births of the period 1966-1973 (TFR = 4980).
11. Romaniuk (1968: 214) supposes that a percentage of childless women of over 45 years of age of 5% corresponds to 'natural infertility' in populations with birth rates of 50 to 60 per 1,000.
12. Among the Djuka of the Tapanahony a longer post-partum taboo is observed; as long as the mother breastfeeds the child, sexual relations should not be resumed. (personal communication of Thoden van Velzen).
13. A Surinam guilder is about 57 U.S. dollar cents.
14. Before 1925 Matawai also were engaged in river transport on the Maroni and the Lawa (French Guiana) and shared in the prosperity of the gold industry (de Beet & Thoden van Velzen 1977: 127).
15. The rainfall data are obtained from 'Regenval in Suriname', Meteorologische Dienst. We calculated the monthly means over the periods 1964-1973 for Boslanti.
16. We refer to those relatives who stay more or less permanently on the coast (more than half of the time).
17. The sample includes *all* males and females in the fertile ages (males 15-55 and females 15-49) of the four upstream villages. We included male affines of the women of these villages and excluded the migrants who resided usually more than half of the time on the coast.
18. 1,630 out of 6,549 weeks.
19. Bourgeois-Pichat's model is composed of a combination of the following variables: a) time of pregnancy, b) post-partum infecundity, c) proportion of fertile ovules, d) foetal loss, e) frequency of sexual intercourse and f) age. We used the variant  $a_L$  (all ovules fertile, frequency of intercourse 8 per cycle age 20-24, long post-partum infecundity) for our calculations (Bourgeois-Pichat 1965: 416).



20. In a year with 13 cycles and a male absenteeism of  $n$  cycles, the waiting time is enlarged by the factor:

$$\frac{13 \text{ waiting time} + (n + n-1 + n-2 \dots n-n)}{13 \text{ waiting time}}$$

21. We will use the total pattern of seasonality of conceptions (pre-1960 plus 1960-1974). The distribution did not change significantly after 1960 (Spearman's rank correlation test). Also we assume that despite the changed labour pattern after 1960, the seasonal character of absenteeism remained unchanged. Therefore it is justified to compare the present (1973-1975) absenteeism with the total pattern of seasonality of conceptions.

22. This observation is in agreement with the research of Luyken & Luyken-Koning (1960, 1961).

23. We must add that another nutritional factor may play a role. The first months of the year palmfruits (*kumu*, *awala*, *maipa*) enrich the diet with vitamin B and C (Geijskes 1954b: 152).

24. We have no information of seasonal influences on foetal death. It would require specific data on the time of conception and length of gestation which were impossible to collect in a retrospective way. Moreover, the figures we collected were far too low compared with estimates of 'natural foetal death' (Nurge 1975: 26).



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## DR. W. CH. DE LA TRY ELLIS (1881 - 1977)

Weinig personen hebben hun stempel op wetgevend gebied zó blijvend gedrukt in de Antilliaanse gemeenschap als Dr. de la Try Ellis. Hij was een opmerkelijke figuur: toegewijd, kundig, maar de openbaarheid schuwend, voorzover iemand die vele openbare functies bekleedt deze kàn schuwen.

Zijn inspirerende kracht, ontsproten uit een zeer ascetische geest, kwam tot volle recht tussen de vier muren van een vergaderzaal. Deze professionele ingetogenheid deed niets tekort aan de boeiende wijze waarop hij van zijn reiservaringen kon vertellen. Dan gingen de ramen open naar voor onze generatie onbekende werelden en toestanden. Hij was een bijzonder causeur, die tot op hoge leeftijd zich nog veel tot in de kleinste details kon herinneren.

Tijdens een lange tocht op het Franse schip 'Gouverneur Moutet', over woelige golven tussen Antigua en Guadeloupe, terwijl bijna iedereen zeeziek over de railing hing, zat hij rustig in een beschut hoekje de stukken van de komende conferentie door te nemen. Terwijl het schuim over de boeg spatte ging hij door met het formuleren van vragen en antwoorden. Daarmee klaar zijnde kwam ook hij naar de railing en vertelde ter opbeuring hoe kalm het vijftig jaar geleden was op de Gele Rivier, waar hij en zijn vrouw op slechts Vichy water moesten leven, terwijl wij ons nu — ondanks de zeeziekte — met champagne konden laven. Of vertelde hij hoe heerlijk het was in vroeger dagen te reizen van Curaçao naar Amsterdam per drie master zeilschepen.

Naast zijn werk leefde hij betrekkelijk teruggetrokken, zich alleen inlatende met zijn vrouw, naaste neven en achterneven.



Geboren op 26 augustus 1881 te Curaçao, promoveerde hij in 1911 tot doctor in de rechtswetenschap aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. In 1917 werd hij benoemd tot lid van het Hof van Justitie, waarvan hij van 1929 tot zijn pensionering in 1934 president is geweest. In 1919 werd hij benoemd tot lid van de Koloniale Raad, waarvan hij in 1927 ondervoorzitter werd. Ook van de Raad van Bestuur (later: Raad van Advies) was hij vele jaren ondervoorzitter. Daarnaast was hij voorzitter of ondervoorzitter van ontelbare commissies, zoals Curaçaosche Commissie Regeling Rechtsverkeer in Oorlogstijd, Deviezencommissie, Commissie ter bestudering van Staatkundige aangelegenheden, Commissie ter voorbereiding van de Rijksconferentie, Commissie Afschaffing Doodstraf, Commissie tot het ontwerpen van wettelijke regelingen nopens de rechtstoestand van landsdienaren en ambtenaren van de eilandgebieden. Hij was het Nederlands-Antilliaans lid van de Nederlandse Sectie van de Caraïbische Commissie en voorzitter van de Commissie herziening Handvest Caraïbische Commissie.

Dr. de la Try Ellis heeft in verscheidene tijdschriften gepubliceerd, vooral over de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Antillen. Hij leverde Mr. B. de Gaay Fortman vele gegevens voor zijn *Kronieken in De West-Indische Gids* (jrg. 18-32, 1937-1951).

Hij was Groot Officier in de Orde van Oranje Nassau, Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw, Ridder in de orde van de H. Gregorius de Grote, Commendador de la Orden de Merito Juan Pablo Duarte, Grand Officier de l'Ordre National 'Honneur et Mérite' de la République d'Haiti.

Personen van de 'oude garde', die de welvarende tijd van oorlog op Curaçao hebben doorgemaakt, spreken zonder uitzondering met lof over de wijze waarop Dr. Ellis al zijn commissies heeft gepresideerd. Grondig voorbereid, tot in de finesses voorgelicht, meestal door eigen naslagwerk, moest men niet met schijnargumenten bij hem komen. In enkele volzinnen werd dan requestrant op beleefde maar afdoende wijze op zijn plaats gezet.



In al die commissies werkte hij belangeloos, idealist als hij was, volkomen los van het materiële. Voor zichzelf vroeg hij nooit iets. Hij was de eenvoud zelf, met respect voor degenen die anders dachten. Dit was juist zijn grote kracht, 'ius suum cuique tribuere', 'aan ieder het zijne geven'. Een hoogstaand en edel mens.

Zelf na de oorlog in 1945 teruggekeerd op Curaçao heb ik Dr. Ellis het meest van nabij meegemaakt in de Caraïbische Commissie. Tijdens en na de bijeenkomsten was hij voor allen — Amerikanen, Fransen, Britten en eigen landgenoten — een 'begrip', symbool van wetenschap en gezag, door een ieder geaccepteerd als een 'levend brok Caribië', als 'homo caribensis'.

Met het heengaan op 95-jarige leeftijd van Dr. Charles de la Try Ellis - bij velen meer bekend als 'oom Charles' — is een periode van gezonde wetgeving, van objectieve adviezen, van belangeloze inzet afgesloten. De huidige generatie kan met trots terugzien op de prestaties van deze jurist uit de vorige generatie. Naast alle andere goede eigenschappen als onkreukbaarheid, geloof en vertrouwen, bezat hij ook het gevoel van dankbaarheid Nederlander te zijn. Op zijn paspoort was hij bijzonder trots.

In al zijn op schrift gezette opinies over medezeggenschap, meer autonomie voor de Antillen, stond steeds voorop: een blijvende band met Nederland waarmee zijn vaderland zovele eeuwen reeds was verbonden. Hij kon zich nimmer indenken dat er bijv. ooit in Nederland zelf een beweging of streven zou ontstaan onder politieke druk van bepaalde zijde, teneinde de Antillen af te stoten. Vandaar terecht tijdens de Ronde Tafel onderhandelingen zijn verzet tegen het opnemen van het zg. 'secessie recht' in het Statuut, en met succes.

Zijn ter aarde bestelling was zonder vertoon. Vrienden, medewerkers en familieleden. Eenvoud en uiting van geloof in het hiernamaals.

I.C. DEBROT



## BOEKBESPREKING

*The Guiana Maroons. A historical and bibliographical introduction*, door Richard Price. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore/Londen, 1976, 184 blz.

De steeds groeiende wetenschappelijke belangstelling voor, en de daarmee samenhangende groeiende literatuur over de marrongemeenschappen in Suriname maakt de bibliografie van Richard Price tot een welkom geschrift. Hij heeft op verantwoorde wijze een geselecteerd maar veelomvattend overzicht van oude en contemporaine literatuur bijeengebracht dat zijn bijzondere nut ongetwijfeld zal bewijzen. (In deel III: blz. 71-185.) Het is namelijk niet eenvoudig een adequaat inzicht te krijgen in het voor elk onderzoek noodzakelijke materiaal: niet alleen zijn de onderzoekers geografisch verspreid maar ook de literatuur zelf, zij het over een gelimiteerd aantal plaatsen.

Price, hoogleraar in de antropologie aan Johns Hopkins University, heeft zich de niet eenvoudige taak gesteld deze vaak moeilijk te traceren leesstof bijeen te garen. Het is hem op lofwaardige wijze gelukt.

*The Guiana Maroons* is echter niet alleen een bibliografie, maar als *historical and bibliographical introduction* heeft deze publicatie een belangrijke toegevoegde waarde.

Deel I (blz. 1-43) plaatst de Surinaamse marrons in hun historisch kader. De herkomst en de demografie van de slaven wordt geanalyseerd en in overzichtelijke en interessante tabellen bijeengebracht; een overzicht van de positie der slaven binnen de kolonie leidt tot een verhelderend essay over het verschijnsel van marronage en de koloniale reactie daarop, gevolgd door een zorgvuldige analyse van het ontstaan en de vormingsperiode van de marrongemeenschappen.

Deel II geeft een beredeneerde ingang tot de eigenlijke bibliografie (blz. 43-70), waarbij aandacht wordt besteed aan 17e, 18e en 19e eeuwse geschriften over de marrons, ook als deze slechts een (al of niet) bijkomstig onderdeel van het geschrevene vormen.

Price geeft tenslotte een nuttig overzicht van moderne literatuur over de geschiedenis, de etnografie, de linguïstiek, medisch onderzoek, zending en missie, en kunstvormen.

Richard Price, die zelf onderzoek doet, tezamen met Sally Price, bij de Surinaamse marrons, waaruit reeds een aantal publicaties zijn voortgekomen, waarschuwt ons terecht voor het feit dat veel bronnen tot de geschiedenis der marrons euro-centrisch of kolonie-centrisch georiënteerd zijn, met de beperkingen van dien: niettemin, ook hij gebruikt ze onvermijdelijkerwijs bij zijn onderzoek, zij het, evenals de meeste moderne onderzoekers, kritisch en voorzichtig. Hij specificeert in dit hoofdstuk niet



wie een aanvaardbare en betrouwbare instelling hebben in hun benadering. Wel kondigt hij aan ons te zullen verblijden met een analyse van de marrongemeenschappen zoals die uit hun orale geschiedenis naar voren komt, en dit met name van de Saramaca-marrons. Bovendien zal hij een aantal facetten, die overigens deels reeds onderwerp van modern onderzoek vormden en vormen, aan een nadere beschouwing onderwerpen. Zijn scherp en subtiel inzicht belooft hier nieuw licht te doen schijnen op de ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van de marrons.

Een paar kritische opmerkingen: een overzicht van de demografische ontwikkeling van de marrons ontbreekt. Nu is dat een precaire en moeilijke zaak: onze kennis berust op onbetrouwbare schattingen van ambtenaren en anderen die soms hogere of lagere aantallen opgaven naar gelang hun dat beter uitkwam, zoals Price zelf ook opmerkt. Niettemin: via vergelijking van deze gegevens onderling en met dergelijke situaties elders — zoals hij dat doet voor slavenaantallen in Suriname en op Jamaica — moet het mogelijk zijn door inter- en extrapolatie een beredeneerde en aanvaardbare tabel tot stand te brengen.

Sprekend over de groep van de Boni-marrons, die zoals Price terecht zegt aan de periferie van het plantagegebied ontstonden, merkt hij op dat zij in de tweede helft van de 18e eeuw binnen het beroemde beschermende cordon woonden. Dit is een vergissing: archiefmateriaal, kaarten en secundaire bronnen maken duidelijk dat niet alleen dit cordon tijdens de Boni-oorlog (1765-1776) nog in aanbouw was, maar ook dat zij hun versterkte dorpen buiten de linie van het getraceerde plan bewoonden en slechts bij aanvallen daarbinnen opereerden.

Price beroept zich hier en elders op gegevens van Abbenhuis, die naar mijn bevinding vaak ondeugdelijk materiaal verschaft.

Veel aandacht wordt besteed aan de vraag hoe de verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen de onderscheiden marrongroepen te verklaren, onder andere geadstrueerd aan perioden waarin deze groepen zich geformeerd hebben. Price vergelijkt daarbij de Saramaca en de Matuwai enerzijds met de Djuka anderzijds. Hij komt tot de conclusie dat de eerstgenoemden veel ouder zijn: zij vormden zich al ver voor het begin van de 18e eeuw. De periode om 1712, toen tijdens de inval van de Fransman Cassard vele slaven tijdens de verwarring het bos in verdwenen, noemt hij als de belangrijkste vormingsperiode voor de Djuka. Hij voert een aantal meestal overtuigende argumenten aan om deze mening te staven. Zij hebben betrekking op verschillen in taal, gewoonten, Afrikaanse origines en de mate van creolisatie. Toch blijven er vragen over. De argumenten zijn ontleend aan documenten betreffende de Saramaca, met wie van ouds de blanken meer contacten hadden dan met de moeilijk bereikbare, geïsoleerde Djuka. Een deel van het archiefmateriaal over deze groep is nog niet onderzocht. Er zijn echter indicaties die wijzen op een hogere ouderdom van de Djukastam. Ten tijde van de vredesonderhandelingen (1759-1760) wordt in de journaals gesproken over volwassenen, in het bos geboren, mannen en vrouwen. Neemt men aan dat een aantal daarvan tussen de 40 en 50 jaar was, dan waren hun ouders al in het bos tussen 1710 en 1720. Dat is weliswaar de periode waarin Price de vorming van de groep plaatst, maar het is toch niet aan te nemen dat deze ouders allen net gearriveerd waren en de eerste stichters van de groep waren. De moeder van het tweede opperhoofd ná de vrede, benoemd in 1763, was met hem als klein kind, waarschijnlijk in 1712, in het bos aangekomen. Zij werd ontvangen door een reeds bestaande groep, die haar als priesteres opnam. En tenslotte: F. Morssink's *Boschnegeriana* (no. 905 in de bibliografie) waar Price ook naar verwijst en waarin onder meer orale geschiedenis van de Djuka wordt weergegeven, vermeldt op blz. 18 dat vóór de door het gouverne-



ment erkende opperhoofden (sedert 1760) vier 'gran-hedeman foe boesi' (groot-hoofdmannen van het bos) fungeerden en wel: Hanoebosman, Agremoén, Koekoedia-koe en Toni. Helaas zijn geen jaartallen genoemd noch het aantal jaren dat zij in functie waren. Het wijst echter duidelijk op een geschiedenis van vóór 1712.

Het zijn dit soort vragen en puzzles die het onderzoek naar de geschiedenis zo fascinerend maken. Ik ben ervan overtuigd dat degenen die zich met dit historische spoorwerk bezighouden en waarvoor de cultureel-antropologen nu ook diepgaande interesse vertonen, niet zullen rusten voor antwoorden uit vergeelde folianten zijn opgediept. De instigatie daartoe en het enthousiasme daarvoor brengt Price met zijn werk op gelukkige wijze over.

Silvia W. de Groot.

*Olie als water. De Curaçaose economie in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw*, door Jaap van Soest. Hogeschool van de Ned. Antillen/Centraal Historisch Archief, Curaçao, 1976, 766 blz.

In december 1976 verscheen op Curaçao het boek *Olie als water. De Curaçaose economie in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw*, geschreven door dr. Jaap van Soest. De periode waarover dit boek handelt, 1900 tot 1953, is de tijd waarin Curaçao een ontwikkeling van diepe armoede naar grote welvaart doormaakte. In de titel van zijn werk heeft Van Soest deze ontwikkeling willen weergeven: in deze halve eeuw zien we 'hoe de olie als water het eiland overstroomde, rijkelijk als een tropische regenbui, de armoede verdrijvend die bij gebrek aan water had geheerst' (blz. 7). In de vijftiger jaren bleek echter hoe wankel die welvaart was: zodra Shell nieste raakte de hele Curaçaose economie verkouden. Het moment waarop de kentering begon koos de schrijver (mede om andere redenen) als eindpunt van zijn studie.

In negen chronologisch geordende hoofdstukken, waarin vrijwel steeds de negen thema's *a.* landbouw, veeteelt en visserij, *b.* mijnbouw, *c.* ambacht en nijverheid, *d.* oliebedrijf, *e.* handel, *f.* haven en scheepvaart, *g.* luchtvaart, *h.* geld- en bankwezen, *i.* overheid, achtereenvolgens aan de orde worden gesteld, geeft Van Soest de gebeurtenissen uit de eerste helft van de 20e eeuw weer. Met behulp van een bij het boek gevoegd overzicht kan de lezer, die slechts in bepaalde aspecten van de Curaçaose economie is geïnteresseerd, de op die onderwerpen betrekking hebbende gedeelten van het boek afzonderlijk bestuderen. In een tiende hoofdstuk, dat tegelijk als samenvatting moet gelden, wordt een overzicht gegeven van de structuur en de conjunctuur van de Curaçaose economie in de behandelde vijftig jaren. De na de eigenlijke tekst van tien hoofdstukken volgende tien grafieken en twaalf tabellen, een negen blz. lange en bijzonder nuttige 'Verantwoording van het gebruikte materiaal', een eveneens zeer nuttige literatuurlijst van 35 blz. en bijna 40 blz. noten, geven op zich zelf reeds aan dat we hier te maken hebben met een uitzonderlijk goed gedocumenteerde studie. Het gehele werk is nogal lijvig geworden: inclusief voorwoord, notenapparaat, registers, summary etc. 766 blz.

Bij de lezing van het boek kreeg ik de indruk dat Van Soest veel meer gegevens heeft kunnen halen uit de archieven dan uit de lange lijst boeken en tijdschriftartikelen die hij doornam. Van die archieven zijn die van de overheid het belangrijkste. Daarnaast



werd een aantal bedrijfsarchieven geraadpleegd, waarvan die van Shell Curaçao N.V. en S.E.L. Maduro en Sons in betekenis de overige overtreffen. De drie hoofdfiguren uit het verhaal zijn dan ook de *overheid*, gepersonificeerd in de gouverneur en een enkele hoofdamtenaar, de *handel*, vooral aanwezig in de figuren van de directie van Maduro en het bestuur van de Kamer van Koophandel, en het internationale *oliebedrijf* dat in 1915 besloot zich op Curaçao te vestigen (door mij hierna steeds Shell genoemd).

Het is niet altijd een fraai beeld dat wij van deze drie hoofdrolspelers krijgen. Uit de onthullende feiten, zoals die door Van Soest uit de archivalia worden gepresenteerd, krijgt de lezer het gevoel dat de hele economie van Curaçao werd beheerst door een kleine groep ondernemers wier winstbejag een niet te bepalen schade veroorzaakte voor de Curaçaose bevolking, wier belangen beschermd moesten worden door een overheid die dikwijls noch de wil noch het apparaat noch de vereiste bekwaamheden bezat om het tegen de ondernemers op te nemen. Dit beeld krijgt onbewust bij de lezer vat zonder dat er sprake is van opdringerigheid van de kant van de schrijver: het zijn de feiten, het zijn de documenten die spreken. Wat bijvoorbeeld te zeggen van de handel, die in de jaren vóór de tweede wereldoorlog de vestiging van een aantal door vreemdelingen geleide fabriekjes zo al niet rechtstreeks tegenwerkte, dan toch in ieder geval wantrouwend bekeek. De handel kreeg ongevraagd steun van de prokureur-generaal; de directeur van Economische Zaken daarentegen benadrukte steeds het grote belang van de vestiging van bedrijven in de produktieve sektor. De gouverneur liet zich bij zijn besluiten meer leiden door de adviezen van de prokureur-generaal dan door die van de directeur van Economische Zaken. Volgens Van Soest is de kans op diversificatie van de Curaçaose economie vlak voor de tweede wereldoorlog duidelijk gemist als gevolg van de tegenwerking van de handel en het gebrek aan toekomstvisie bij de gouverneurs Van Slobbe en Wouters (zie de samenvattende opmerkingen van Van Soest op blz. 413 en 436). Ook na de oorlog deden de enkelingen die het belang zagen van de vestiging van industriebedrijven vergeefse moeite de desinteresse van handel en bankwezen te doorbreken. Van Soest zegt hierover: 'Het gaat niet aan om het mislukken van de industrialisatieplannen aan een enkele factor toe te schrijven. Toch moet worden gezegd dat er één element was dat een bijzonder gewicht in de schaal legde. Dat was het gebrek aan motivatie, dat uit conservatisme of pessimisme voortvloeide' (blz. 537). Het beeld dat de lezer van de handel krijgt is weinig verheffend van aard, als men althans menselijke en morele overwegingen in zijn oordeel laat meespreken. Puur economisch gezien kan men alleen maar bewonderend spreken over de handel; er werd immers met een minimum aan inspanning en risico een maximum aan rendement behaald uit de exclusieve agent-schappen die de kern vormden van elke handelsonderneming.

Ook de uitgebreide informatie die verschaft wordt over de tweede hoofdrolspeler, het oliebedrijf, leidt er niet altijd toe dat we een erg gunstig beeld van dit bedrijf krijgen. Gerretson beweerde dat Shell zich op Curaçao vestigde om ook aan de West welvaart te brengen. Van Soest maakt duidelijk dat dit motief niet voorkomt in de documenten die op deze vestiging betrekking hebben. Volgens hem speelden de grote fiscale vrijheden, die op Curaçao konden worden bedongen, en het feit dat tot het bestuur van een Nederlandse kolonie eventueel gemakkelijk toegang kon worden verkregen dankzij de goede relaties die men via Colijn en de BPM-directeur Pleyte, wiens broer minister van Koloniën was, in Haagse politieke kringen bezat, een veel grotere rol (blz. 175). Dat van deze relaties bij verschillende gelegenheden ook gebruik werd gemaakt, toont de schrijver overtuigend aan. Doordat de Curaçaose samenleving in economisch opzicht volkomen afhankelijk werd van Shell, verkeerde dit bedrijf in een machtspositie. In zijn contacten met de Curaçaose overheid maakte Shell hiervan



wel eens misbruik, bijvoorbeeld wanneer de overheid zocht naar mogelijkheden om de belastingen te verhogen. Uit de gegevens die Van Soest aandraagt komt Shell naar voren als een bedrijf dat in zijn streven zoveel mogelijk winst te behalen ook wel eens methoden gebruikte die schadelijk waren voor Curaçao.

Toch is hiermee niet alles gezegd. In het laatste hoofdstuk, waarin Van Soest niet de documenten laat spreken maar zijn eigen oordeel geeft, erkent hij dat de olie veel goeds heeft gebracht op het eiland, ook al is een deel van dat goede er niet gekomen dankzij het door de Shelldirectie uitgestippelde beleid maar meer als een vanzelfsprekend gevolg van de aanwezigheid van Shell. Elke medaille heeft zijn keerzijde. In een poing beide kanten van de medaille te laten zien zegt Van Soest o.a.: 'Door haar grootte was de oliemaatschappij automatisch een werkgever van belang, maar bij de werving van personeel stelde zij de Antilianen soms bewust ten achter. Zij betaalde grote loonsommen uit waar tienduizenden mensen van leefden, maar het is een vraag of ze ieder het loon uitbetaalde dat hij voor een minimaal menswaardig bestaan van zichzelf en de zijnen nodig had. Via haar betaalrol verspreidde de CPIM koopkracht, tot voordeel van de Curaçaose handel, maar tegelijkertijd zette zij doelbewust eigen fabriekswinkels en een Engelse firma tegen de plaatselijke handelaren in. Door haar financiële relaties met de buitenwereld had zij een gunstige invloed op de betalingsbalans, maar niemand mocht te weten komen hoe groot de winst was die met Curaçaose arbeid werd gemaakt en waarheen deze via de anonimiteit van de multinational verdween. Door een element van harde zakelijkheid te introduceren die in deze kleine gemeenschap niet bekend was, verruimde zij de horizon van de Curaçaonaars — maar hoe talrijk waren de littekens die ze daarbij naliet?' (blz. 606).

Voor het beoordelen van het beleid van Shell moet overigens bedacht worden dat sommige handelingen, die dertig, veertig jaar geleden nog als volstrekt geoorloofd werden beschouwd, volgens hedendaagse maatstaven verwerpelijk worden geacht. Wellicht had de schrijver dit iets meer kunnen belichten.

Het is niet mogelijk aan elk onderdeel van dit dikke boek uitgebreid aandacht te besteden. Om een indruk te geven van het vele dat aan de orde komt, geeft ik een, overigens lang niet volledige, opsomming van onderwerpen waarover Van Soest schrijft:

- de landbouwplannen van gouverneur De Jong van Beek en Donk, waarvan de realisatie na het vertrek van deze gouverneur al gauw werd gestaakt.
- de later in de eeuw ondernomen, veel bescheidener, pogingen om de landbouw op een wat hoger peil te brengen, waarvan het project 'Helfrichdorp' het bekendst is.
- de ups en downs en de uiteindelijke neergang van de zeilvaart.
- de aanvankelijke bloei en latere ondergang van de strohoedenvlechterij en andere ambachtelijke nijverheid.
- de gang van zaken rondom de fosfaatmijn, lange tijd de grootste werkgever van Curaçao, maar sterk afhankelijk van de wereldmarkt.
- de concurrentiestrijd tussen Maduro en de Curaçaose Handelsmaatschappij, die op alle fronten door de Maduro's werd gewonnen.
- het antagonisme tussen de Maduro's en Shell, en tussen Shell en de handel in het algemeen, en de contacten tussen Jersey Standard en Maduro, compleet met een geval van 'smeergeld' (blz. 518).
- de grote verwachtingen, die het graven van het Panamakanaal op Curaçao teweegbracht en die uitliepen op een deceptie.

De informatie, die Van Soest verschaft, is dikwijls zo uitvoerig en gedetailleerd, dat zijn boek jarenlang als naslagwerk zijn waarde zal behouden. Nog tijden zullen we kunnen zeggen: 'Zoek het maar even op in Van Soest', een bezigheid die dankzij de registers ook inderdaad uitvoerbaar is.



Naast de grote bewondering en waardering die de prestatie van Van Soest afdwingt geeft zijn boek toch ook wel aanleiding tot het maken van enkele kritische opmerkingen.

De eerste geldt het teveel en tegelijk ook het te weinig dat het boek biedt. Bij verschillende passages vroeg ik me af of de schrijver nu niet wat al te veel details in zijn relaas had gestopt. Een dergelijk gevoel bekwam mij bijvoorbeeld bij lezing van het gedeelte over de uitbreiding van de haven i.v.m. de opening van het Panamakanaal, en bij hoofdstuk 5 par. 4, waarin een erg opsommerig verhaal moet duidelijk maken dat de welvaart zich in de twintiger jaren over het eiland begon te verspreiden. Ook de gedeelten waarin de bouw van w  er een high vacuum installatie, een trumble-destillatie-eenheid of van een Dubbs-kraakinstallatie door Shell wordt beschreven, behoren door hun gedetailleerdheid   n doordat de lezer desondanks nauwelijks enig zicht krijgt in de vraag waarvoor al die installaties dienden, niet tot de meest boeiende van het boek.

Daartegenover staat dat het ook wel eens minder biedt dan je zou verwachten. Nergens trof ik bijvoorbeeld een goede beroepsstatistiek van de bevolking aan, hetgeen mij toch onontbeerlijk lijkt wil men een indruk krijgen van de veranderingen die de komst van de olie in de structuur van de economie en in de samenleving teweeg bracht. Van Soest zou toch in ieder geval enkele summier statistieken, zoals die in de Koloniale Verslagen werden vermeld, hebben kunnen opnemen. Ook het overnemen van de statistiek over het aantal auto's, bussen en motorrijwielen in de periode 1931-1941 uit het *Weekblad Cura  o* van 17 jan. 1942 zou interessant geweest zijn.

De explosieve ontwikkeling van het oliebedrijf op Cura  o, waardoor zich een proces voltrok dat als de industri  le revolutie van Cura  o beschouwd kan worden, had grote gevolgen. Een industri  le samenleving kwam in de plaats van de traditionele, louter op handel en landbouw geori  nteerde samenleving. Wat deze ommekeer betekende voor de bevolking blijkt niet uit het boek van Van Soest. Slechts wordt hier en daar aangestipt hoe moeilijk het de gewone man viel aan de nieuwe situatie te wennen, bijvoorbeeld als hij spreekt over de Shellarbeiders, die zeer onregelmatig en zelden op tijd op de fabriek verschenen en in de regentijd een hoog absent  isme vertoonden omdat ze dan hun stukjes grond wilden bewerken. In het voorwoord verklaart de schrijver waarom hij niet meer aandacht aan dit soort, tot de sociale geschiedenis behorende, verschijnselen heeft besteed: de lezer moet geduld hebben tot een vervolgstudie is verschenen. Naar mijn smaak rechtvaardigt dit toch niet de angstvalligheid waarmee de sociale geschiedenis uit dit boek is geweerd en die de schrijver er toe brengt zich te verontschuldigen als hij bij uitzondering w  l eens een stukje sociale geschiedenis beschrijft (blz. 189). Aan de politieke geschiedenis heeft hij, daar waar het paste, terecht toch ook aandacht besteed? (zie bijv. hfdst. 9 par. 1).

Een volgende opmerking betreft de indeling van het boek in acht perioden (het eerste hoofdstuk geeft de toestand omstreeks 1900 weer). Elke periode omvat maximaal acht jaren. In het algemeen zijn de begrenzingen ervan goed gekozen; bovendien heeft vrijwel elke periode een eigen 'gezicht', afgezien misschien van het tijdperk 1909-1917. De auteur heeft dus een gelukkige hand gehad bij de chronologische indeling van de stof, maar niettemin is hij niet helemaal ontkomen aan enkele gevaren die een dergelijke indeling met zich brengt. Soms moest een onderwerp dat beter in zijn geheel in    n keer had kunnen worden behandeld in twee gedeelten worden besproken omdat het nu eenmaal toevallig in twee perioden thuishoorde. Als voorbeeld noem ik de beschrijving van het Helfrichdorp, waar de lezer de eerste brok informatie van krijgt op blz. 425-427 en de tweede brok pas in het volgende hoofdstuk op blz. 494. Met de alo  commissie ging het precies zo: de instelling van de commissie in 1938 wordt vermeld op blz. 421, het rapport van 1943 wordt in het volgende hoofd-



stuk op blz. 496 genoemd. (Overigens: Wagenaar Hummelinck schrijft (*W.I.G.* 27, 1946, blz. 365) dat er in augustus 1943 bij gouvernementsbeschikking een Aloë-Commissie werd ingesteld waarvan het ongedateerde *Rapport* in 1945 verscheen. Dat er daarvoor reeds een Aloëcommissie bestond blijkt uit zijn mededeling op blz. 363.) De indeling in korte perioden heeft wellicht ook veroorzaakt dat er nogal eens iets wordt herhaald.

Het beschrijven van de recente geschiedenis vereist van de historicus een extra dosis waakzaamheid met betrekking tot de objectiviteit die hij in acht moet nemen. In het algemeen is Van Soest hier zeker in geslaagd; hij laat de documenten spreken zonder ze aan zijn eigen oordeel ondergeschikt te maken. Dit moet met nadruk gezegd worden want in het boek zijn verschillende aanwijzingen te vinden dat hij zich in hoge mate betrokken voelt bij de Curaçaose gebeurtenissen. Niet voor niets spreekt hij over 'ons eiland', 'onze haven' etc. Soms worden zelfs op Curaçao ontstane vormen van incorrect Nederlands of volkomen verouderde woorden gebruikt, zoals 'planten van mais' en 'plantzaad' (i.p.v. zaaien en zaaizaad) en 'prijszetting' (i.p.v. vaststelling van maximumprijzen). Deze zelfde betrokkenheid heeft echter toch ook wel een enkele maal de vereiste zakelijkheid in de argumentatie en de nodige distantie in gevaar gebracht. Bij zijn beoordeling van de vele rapporten die in de loop van de 20e eeuw door Nederlandse deskundigen over verschillende aspecten van de Curaçaose economie werden uitgebracht is Van Soest nogal eens geneigd om zonder meer een Curaçaose bril op te zetten. Zo neemt hij bijvoorbeeld de op de voorgestelde belastingherziening van 1908 geuite kritiek, dat deze herziening te weinig rekening hield met de Curaçaose realiteit, te gemakkelijk en zonder argumenten over. Was de kritiek in feite veel anders dan het normale protest dat bij elke belastingverhoging of -wijziging wordt gehoord? Ook de bijna schampere opmerkingen die Van Soest op blz. 449 maakt over Nederlandse deskundigen, die vanuit hun vakkennis adviezen uitbrachten over Curaçao zonder de plaatselijke omstandigheden te kennen, had hij wel wat beter met argumenten kunnen ondersteunen. Is het niet zo dat het argument dat de adviseur te weinig rekening heeft gehouden met de plaatselijke omstandigheden op Curaçao altijd wordt gehoord als er adviezen worden uitgebracht die op zich juist zijn maar anders uitvallen dan men op Curaçao graag zou hebben gezien? Te weinig kritisch is de schrijver wanneer hij zonder meer van de Grootlandbouwcommissie de conclusie overneemt dat de plantages te zwaar verhypothekerd waren. Vergeet hij hierbij niet een klein beetje dat deze conclusie al bij voorbaat vaststond en zeer sterk was geïnspireerd door de man die het meeste belang had bij deze voorstelling van zaken, nl. de directeur van de hypotheekbank? Een waardeoordeel, zoals dat over het gebouw van de KNSM, is overbodig (blz. 393).

Het notenapparaat en de literatuurlijst zijn beide van zeer groot nut, maar geven toch ook aanleiding tot het stellen van enkele vragen. Waarom wordt bij verwijzingen naar archiefstukken uit het Centraal Historisch Archief dikwijls geen inventarisnummer vermeld? Waarom worden gedrukte rapporten, die in de literatuurlijst ook apart worden vermeld (zoals die van Went, Havelaar en Grootlandbouwcommissie) vaak zonder pagina-aanduiding geciteerd? Welk criterium is bij het samenstellen van de literatuurlijst gehanteerd? Er is een zeldzaam grote hoeveelheid titels bijeengebracht, maar volledig is de lijst niet. Als alleen titels zijn opgenomen die de schrijver met voordeel heeft kunnen raadplegen, dan vraagt men zich toch af welke gegevens gehaald zijn uit de vele, dikwijls zeer kleine, krante- en tijdschriftartikelen, die worden vermeld.

Het werk is kennelijk met grote zorg op drukfouten en onzorgvuldigheden nagekeken, want dergelijke onvolmaaktheden trof ik slechts in een zeer gering aantal aan.



Bij een beoordeling van de technische uitvoering moeten wij rekening houden met het feit dat dit boek het grootste is dat de 160 jaar oude drukkerij 'De Curaçaosche Courant' tot nu toe heeft geproduceerd. Gezien de betrekkelijk bescheiden technische uitrusting van deze drukkerij kan dit resultaat zeer bevredigend worden genoemd. Om te voorkomen dat het boek nòg dikker zou worden dan het nu al is, heeft men dun papier moeten gebruiken — helaas zó dat de letters aan de achterkant er vaak door heen schemeren. Jammer is ook dat dit boek, dat toch niet, nadat het eenmaal is gelezen, voorgoed in de boekenkast verdwijnt maar als naslagwerk gebruikt zal worden, niet in een gebonden uitgave is verschenen. Hier hebben de technische mogelijkheden het wenselijke in de weg gestaan; een goed hanteerbaar boek is het daardoor helaas niet geworden.

De schrijver zal met voldoening hebben gezien dat zijn werk zo gemakkelijk zijn weg naar het publiek heeft gevonden, dat nog geen jaar later een tweede druk (bij de Walburg Pers Zutphen — gelukkig op ondoorschijnend papier) kon verschijnen. Hij heeft reden om trots te zijn op zijn prestatie; zijn boek verdient het een grote lezerskring te krijgen. Naar de aangekondigde vervolgstudie wordt met belangstelling uitgezien.

W.E. Renkema



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